

**DEBORAH ROSS
GETS TONY SLATTERY
ON THE COUCH**

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**TOON TRIUMPH
THE BIG GAME THAT
NEWCASTLE WON**

SPORT TABLOID



**COCO CHANEL
LIVES AGAIN IN A
CHELSEA GARDEN**

THE EYE



THE INDEPENDENT

Monday 18 May 1998 45p (IR 50p) No 3,613

Rich nations snub pleas of the poor

By Paul Valley

THE LEADERS of the rich nations yesterday turned a deaf ear to the pleas of the world's poor for more effective debt relief. Despite warm words at the end of the Group of Eight summit in Birmingham, the meeting offered no significant improvement in the very limited measures at present in place.

The prime ministers and presidents of the major powers promised to support a "speedy and determined" extension of debt relief to more countries and announced an offer of "interim" relief.

The words came not in a joint communiqué, as the G8 has issued on other issues, but in a statement issued by the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair. It was interpreted as evidence of a split within the G8 leaders whom the British failed to persuade to more radical measures.

The statement said: "We encourage all eligible countries to take the policy measures needed to embark on the process as soon as possible." It added: "We will work with the international institutions and other creditors to ensure that when they qualify, countries get the relief they need, including interim debt relief measures whenever necessary."

This was largely a reiteration of the existing Highly Indebted Poor Countries' Initiative (HIPC). It did nothing to address the urgency of poor countries, particularly in Africa, making major cuts in health and education budgets - to free money to pay debts - at a time when child mor-

ality, malnutrition and illiteracy is soaring throughout the continent.

After a weekend in which some 60,000 demonstrators ringed the G8 conference centre calling for urgent action on debt, aid agencies expressed grave disappointment at the lack of new measures. While British officials insisted that the proposals represented a breakthrough in advancing debt onto the international agenda, debt campaigners branded the summit's response as inadequate, unworkable and unfair.

Third World debt was one of four main topics discussed at a less for-

in his Mauritius mandate under which three-quarters of the world's poorest countries would qualify for debt relief by 2000.

Campaigners had hoped for four things. They wanted:

- a reduction in the number of years (six) that poor countries have to follow a strict IMF economic reform programme before they qualify for HIPC debt relief;
- war-torn countries like Rwanda to be exempt from the six-year rule;
- more relief to be made available to the few who do qualify - Mozambique HIPC has reduced debt by just 27 pence per Mozambican a year;
- and countries to be allowed to set aside money for health and education before calculations on debt payments.

None of this has been done, though Mr Blair said that special arrangements for countries that had suffered war or civil strife were in prospect and that G8 members will "enhance" mutual co-operation on infectious and parasitic diseases, including malaria and AIDS.

Members of the US team expressed satisfaction with the need for "sound" reforms in recipient countries - an emphasis which aid agencies interpreted as evidence that harsh conditionality would continue.

Ed Mayo, Jubilee 2000's chairman, one of the debt campaigners who met Mr Blair after Saturday's six-mile-long human chain rally, said the Prime Minister's warm words then had not been matched by the final statement. "There's a sense of deep disappointment," he said.

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Paul Valley, page 19

mal, more focused summit designed to recapture the spirit of the early summits in the Seventies. While jobs and training, transnational crime and world economic growth were also on the agenda, debt was the subject that had aroused most popular interest in Britain.

Tens of thousands of people - from churches, aid agencies and community groups - came out on to the streets of Birmingham on Saturday under the banner of the Jubilee 2000 coalition to call for a one-off cancellation of poor countries' debt for the millennium. A spokesman for Jubilee 2000 said that the G8 leaders had promised less than Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, had proposed

300,000 turn out to salute Arsenal's foreign legion



A young Arsenal supporter shows his enthusiasm for his heroes at Islington Town Hall, north London yesterday Photograph: Rui Xavier

FOR the middle-aged men nursing hangovers, their beer guts spilling generously from frayed Arsenal jerseys, it seemed like only yesterday that legends of a different era had made this journey.

From the art-deco portals of Highbury to the adoring throng at Islington Town Hall on board an open-topped bus, the route was the same. So too was the cargo: the Championship trophy and the FA Cup.

Only the names were different. In 1971, the last time Arsenal com-

pleted the elusive Double, it was the likes of Radford, George, Wilson and Kennedy, managed by Bertie Mee, who proved they were the finest of their generation.

In 1998, it was Overmars, Bergkamp, Anelka and Vieira, managed by Arsène Wenger, who achieved the same feat. But, under blue skies and mid-day heat approaching 90F, the names did not matter to the 300,000 fans who lined the route of the celebrations.

"He comes from Senegawww", he plays for Arsenalawww", they sang of

Vieira, squeezing out a rhyme from the words Arsenal and Senegal. Of Bergkamp, one banner read "100 per cent Arsenal". And of Emmanuel Petit they sang: "He's tall, he's quick/ His name's a porno fic."

In short, the sea of red had taken them to their hearts as if they had been born inside the Highbury ground itself.

"As soon as they put that shirt on, their nationality is Arsenal," said Adrian Terry, 33, who celebrated with his five-year-old son, Adam. "I love the old heroes but I want Adam

to remember these men as heroes the next time we win the Double. If we have to wait this long again, he might have a son of his own by then."

As each of the team hoisted the trophies in turn, the crowd went wild. But it was a day of peaceful, if boisterous, celebration. On Saturday, after Arsenal's 2-0 defeat of Newcastle, trouble spilled out of several Highbury pubs, two cars were set alight and 38 people were arrested, mainly for being drunk and disorderly.

Blair enlists Clinton for 'Yes' vote

By David McKittrick
Ireland Correspondent

PRESIDENT Clinton yesterday lent his personal weight to the campaign for a Yes vote in Friday's referendum in Ireland, holding out the prospect of major new US investment for an agreed new political settlement.

Together with Tony Blair, the President appealed to voters to make a new start, saying they had nothing to lose by giving the Good Friday agreement a try.

In Birmingham for the G8 summit, he declared: "The people are going to have a very interesting, very rich, very good life if they vote to live together. If they vote to stay apart, they are still going to be frustrated, distrustful, angry and a little bit left out."

His comments came against a background of increasing Government anxiety about the Unionist vote in the Northern Ireland referendum, following opinion surveys showing that a majority of Protestants intend to vote



Tony Blair and Hillary Clinton chat before a concert at the G8 summit Photograph: Louisa Butler/Reuters

No on Friday.

The latest Unionist voice recommending a No vote was that of Lord Molyneux, David Trimble's predecessor as leader of the Ulster Unionist party, who has joined six of the party's 10 MPs in opposing the agreement.

In his intervention, President Clinton stressed: "If this agreement is embraced, anybody who returns to

violence is never going to be a friend of the United States. We won't tolerate it, we won't support it, we will do everything we can to affirmatively oppose it."

He recalled the late Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin telling him in 1993, before signing an agreement with the PLO: "You don't make peace with your friends, you make peace and

then you make friends." He said the people of Northern Ireland "can get over this. It's a little bit of a leap of faith but the risks of doing it are so much less than the risks of walking away. Why take the risk that this moment won't present itself again for another generation?"

The Government will be hoping that his words, together with a third visit which Mr Blair is due to make to

Belfast this week, will change the pattern of recent weeks, which has seen a steady growth in the number of Unionists intending to vote No.

Mr Blair himself sought to soothe Unionist opinion with assurances on the future of the RUC, the position on accelerated prisoner releases and the arms decommissioning issue.

He said of the possibility of an adverse referendum result: "We are here and we will try and pick up the pieces as best we can. We pick up the pieces when everything goes wrong, but we would be in a situation where it wouldn't be the status quo."

Meanwhile, a large car bomb left outside an RUC station in the town of Armagh was made safe yesterday by army experts. The device, which contained 760lb of explosives, is assumed to be the handwork of a dissident republican faction.

Fears over prisoner release, page 4
Unionists march towards No vote, page 19

Britain's fifth richest woman turns screw on her tenants

By Steve Boggan

A PROPERTY company owned by Britain's fifth-richest woman - one place ahead of the Queen - is attempting to increase rents for some of its tenants by more than 200 per cent.

Bankway Properties, part of

a group headed by Clarice Pears, 64, a pensioner whose family is worth £260m, has applied for the increase to the Rent Officer Service, which fixes fair rents for secured tenants.

If approved, it will result in rent rises from £82 a week to £250 for some residents, and from £120 to £250 for others. Bankway Properties, part of a network of companies owned by the William Pears Family Holdings group, has made the application in respect of Hylda

Court, a 1930s mansion block of 30 flats near Hampstead, north London.

Some residents, who include pensioners who have lived there for more than 30 years, claim the increase is part of a business plan aimed at pricing them out of their homes. As tenants with old-style protected tenancies, they have more rights - and usually lower rents - than the more common assured shorthold tenancies.

The latter is favoured by

landlords because rents can be charged at market rates.

Bankway acquired Hylda Court in March 1996 when all the residents held protected tenancies. Since then, some residents have been issued with demands for rent arrears they claim they do not owe; some have been issued with notices to quit; others have simply left because of constant noise as vacated flats are renovated and let out at higher rents.

The company denies trying

to squeeze out its older tenants but does admit to wanting to make as much money as it can.

"We're not social landlords or a council housing department or a housing association," said the company's estates manager, Nick Stanley. "The idea is to maximise the income from the building. But we have done nothing wrong and we have nothing to be ashamed of. We are simply trying to get the market rate for the flats."

The reclusive landlady, page 6

In brief

Winchester fear

WINCHESTER College, Britain's oldest public school, may net £100m from a huge housing development that could threaten the character of the historic city. Page 3

Jakarta waits

JAKARTA was on tenterhooks as two generals struggled to wrest power from President Suharto, and an opposition leader promised to bring a million protesters out on to the streets. Page 14

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TOMORROW

■ Terry Pratchett: why Discworld is just like High Wycombe

■ Phil Hammond: secrets of an after-dinner speaker

■ Network+ Breaking up is hard to do - what next for Microsoft?



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Recycled paper made up 41.4% of the raw material for UK newspapers in the first half of 1997.

Tories seek judge for Sandline inquiry

By Colin Brown and Andrew Buncombe

THE INDEPENDENT inquiry into the Foreign Office handling of the "arms to Africa" crisis is expected to be headed, not by a judge or barrister, but by a former civil servant.

The inquiry into the possible involvement of senior officials in supporting mercenaries, could begin in days now that the separate Customs & Excise investigation is believed to have come down against prosecuting "military consultants" Sandline International Ltd.

It is believed that one of the reasons a prosecution is unlikely to take place is that Sandline would argue the "Matrix-Churchill" defence, claiming they believed they were acting with official approval.

The Conservatives will today in the Commons try to put Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, on the spot by calling for an independent inquiry headed by a judge.

But *The Independent* has learned that that has been ruled out by ministers. One insider said: "He is not a judge or a barrister but he has a legal background, and knows the working of government." However, the move could open the way for accusations of a whitewash, if the inquiry fails to be seen as rigorous in its work.

Michael Howard, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, who will lead the Tory attack today, said on GMTV: "We need an independent inquiry outside Parliament - someone like a judge who has full powers to hear all the evidence from all the witnesses, to go through it meticulously and then reach a view and publish a report."

"We want all the evidence in public so we can all see exactly what went on."

The Customs inquiry is understood to have concluded that while there is evidence that the shipment of arms to Sierra Leone, in support of the elected president Tejan Kabbah, may have been in breach of UN sanctions, they have decided there is little prospect of a conviction.

Sky Air Cargo Services, the airline which actually flew the weapons, is also unlikely to face prosecution.

A decision on whether to prosecute has still to be made by the Attorney General, John Morris. His decision, to be announced by Customs, could be made public today.

An announcement that no criminal prosecution is to be carried out would clear the way for the Foreign Office inquiry to be set up by the Foreign Secretary. "It would allow us to get cracking," said a source.

Li Col Tim Spicer, the former British Army officer who heads Sandline International, was yesterday understood to be spending the day on a beach on the south coast with his children.

Sandline has always insisted it acted lawfully in supplying arms and training to reinstate President Kabbah, who was deposed in a coup in May 1997, even though the shipment appeared to breach a UN resolution banning arms sales to the country. It said it had regular briefings with senior officials in the FCO.

The Foreign Secretary has denied giving a "nod and wink" to Sandline and is said by friends to be "relishing the prospect" of a debate against the Tories to put his side of the case.

Tony Blair yesterday continued to defend Mr Cook saying he led the restoration "from a brutal military coup d'état of a democratically elected regime."

The person in charge of doing that was the Foreign Secretary and he did it excellently."



An official puts the finishing touches to the exhibit at Heron's bonsai stand at the Chelsea Flower Show, which opens today Photograph: David Sandison

Straw allays fears on human rights laws

By Ian Burrell
Home Affairs Correspondent

JACK STRAW, the Home Secretary, has made a concession to religious leaders to allay their fears that new human rights laws could allow homosexuals to marry in church.

Religious leaders were concerned that the resistance to gay weddings in church could be interpreted as a breach of the European Convention on Human Rights, which is now being incorporated into British law.

But the Government will today announce an amendment to the Human Rights Bill to ensure that courts recognise "the importance of the Convention right of freedom of thought, conscience and religion."

The amendment follows discussions between Mr Straw and church leaders. A Home Office spokesman said: "The amendment that the Government has tabled addresses the church's concern about the potential effect of the Human Rights Bill on religious organisations."

Bishops and religious leaders have already inflicted three defeats on the Government in the Lords amid claims that the new laws could lead to changes over church policy on homosexuality and education. It was further feared that the legislation could force churches to allow divorces to remarry in church.

The Roman Catholic church was concerned that it might be challenged on sex discrimination grounds by women who were prevented from becoming priests.

Another amendment, this time to the Education Bill, will also be announced today to address the concern of religious leaders that the new laws might render them powerless to prevent atheists teaching at church schools. News of the amendments prompted speculation of a political clash between Mr Straw and the Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine of Lairg, who was understood to have thought that such changes were unnecessary.

But yesterday the two departments quickly closed ranks. A spokesman for the Lord Chancellor's Department said, the amendments had been "fully discussed and agreed" between the relevant ministers.

Leading article, page 18

Cudlipp, giant of the tabloids, dies

By Andrew Buncombe

LORD CUDLIPP, the man considered by many to be the greatest ever tabloid journalist, has died after suffering from lung cancer.

His family announced that he died at home in Chichester, West Sussex, yesterday morning. He was 84.

Cudlipp remains Fleet Street's youngest-ever editor, having taken charge of the *Sunday Pictorial* - later the *Sunday Mirror* - at the age of 24. But it was on the *Daily Mirror* that Hugh Cudlipp really made his mark. During the 1940s and 1950s, he transformed the paper into something both popular and high-minded.

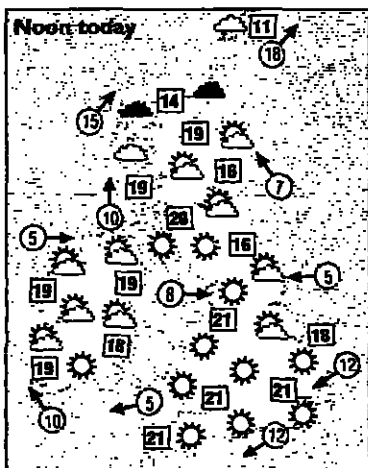
Former *Daily Mirror* editor Richard Stott said: "Hugh Cudlipp was one of the greatest tabloid journalists there ever was. He was the architect of the *Mirror* of the 40s and 50s."



Cudlipp: tabloid architect

Mike Molloy, editor of the *Daily Mirror* from 1975 to 1985, described Cudlipp as "the most exciting man you could meet in journalism."

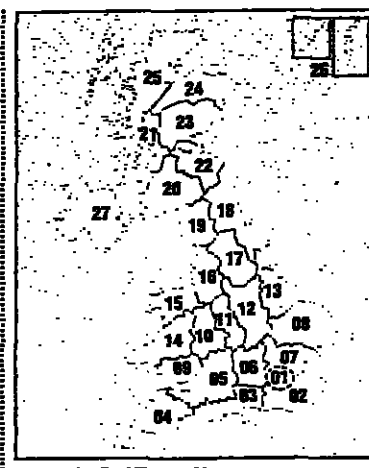
WEATHER



British Isles weather

Most recent available figures at noon local time
C: Celsius; F: Fahrenheit; W: Wind; S: Sunshine; M: Moon; R: Rain; H: Humidity; P: Pressure; V: Visibility; D: Dew Point; T: Tides; I: Ice; A: Air Quality; L: Lightning; G: Ground Conditions; N: Night Vision; O: Other; U: Unknown; X: Extreme; Y: Yacht; Z: Zephyr; AA: Roadwatch; AB: Air Base; AC: Air Control; AD: Air Defence; AE: Air Enroute; AF: Air Force; AG: Air Group; AH: Air Host; AI: Air Inlet; AJ: Air Jet; AK: Air Kite; AL: Air Line; AM: Air Mail; AN: Air Net; AO: Air Out; AP: Air Port; AQ: Air Quality; AR: Air Route; AS: Air Service; AT: Air Traffic; AU: Air Unit; AV: Air Vehicle; AW: Air Way; AX: Air X-ray; AY: Air Yacht; AZ: Air Zone.

Aberdeen	F 14.57	Glasgow	S 16.61
Anglesey	F 15.59	Inverness	F 14.57
Ayr	F 17.63	Isle of Wight	C 18.64
Belfast	F 17.63	Jersey	S 20.68
Birmingham	F 19.66	London	C 21.70
Blackpool	F 19.66	Manchester	S 19.66
Bournemouth	F 21.70	Newcastle	S 18.64
Brighton	F 17.63	Oxford	S 19.66
Bristol	F 20.68	Plymouth	S 20.68
Cardiff	F 17.63	Scarborough	F 16.61
Cardigan	S 20.68	Southampton	S 22.72
Dublin	C 17.63	Southend	S 16.61
Edinburgh	F 14.57	Stamford	G 13.55
Exeter	S 18.64	Stornoway	G 13.55
Glasgow	C 16.61	York	F 19.66



INDEPENDENT Weatherline

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High tides	AM	HT	PM	HT
London	06:55	6.6	19:07	6.4
Liverpool	04:11	8.3	16:42	7.9
Avonmouth	12:16	11.0	00:45	10.9
Hull (Albert Dock)	11:24	7.6	00:07	7.4
Greenock	05:27	3.1	18:02	2.9
Gun Laughton	04:51	3.6	17:43	3.4

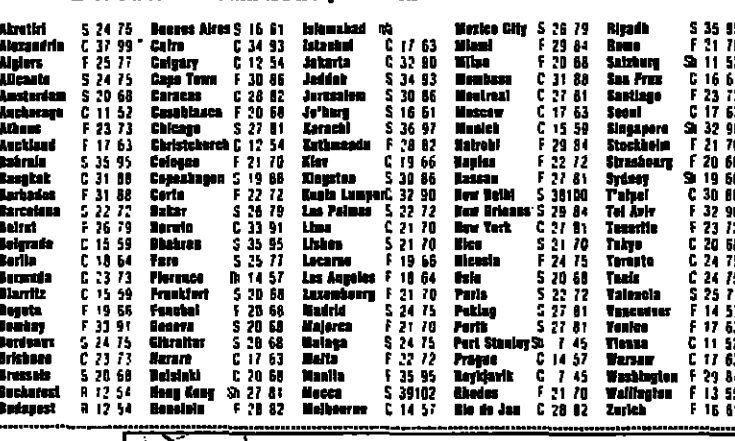
Lighting-up times

	21.28	to	05.12
Belfast	21.01	to	05.06
Birmingham	21.00	to	05.13
Bristol	21.20	to	04.58
Cardiff	20.59	to	05.04
Cardigan	21.08	to	05.03
Cardigan	21.12	to	04.52

Sun & moon

	Sun rises	05.05
	Sun sets	20.50
	Moon rises	01.35
	Moon sets	11.22
	Next new moon	May 19

World weather



Atlantic chart, noon today



High tides

	21.28	to	05.12
	21.01	to	05.06
	21.00	to	05.13
	21.20	to	04.58
	20.59	to	05.04
	21.08	to	05.03
	21.12	to	04.52

WILLIAM HARTSTON
WEATHER
WISE

THE PROBLEM of forecasting the weather is mainly one of timescale. Thanks to increased knowledge and faster computers, today's short-term forecasts are remarkably accurate up to a day or two ahead, and our understanding of long-term trends means that we can be pretty confident that the earth will suffer another ice age within the next 10,000 years or so. It's those irritating periods between three days and 10,000 years that are the main problem. The ambitious programme of the International Clivar Project Office, however, intends to tackle it.

Clivar - a study of Climate Variability and Predictability - is a new project of the World Climate Research Programme which spans a wide range of timescales. As its director, Dr John Gould, explains: "It will conduct research aimed at such questions as: Can we predict whether next year's monsoon will be good or bad? Can we say when the next El Niño will be? ... Can we define precisely what its impacts will be?"

The answers to questions such as these will give perhaps the only real measure of the extent to which we are able to forecast the weather more than three days ahead.

The Clivar project office is in the process of moving from Hamburg to Southampton which, as we mentioned on Friday, was the hottest place in the country last week. Even if this is not a clear confirmation that these Clivar chaps know what they are talking about, it is good to know that the weather gods are smiling on their efforts.

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هكذا من الأصل



Winchester College's £100m housing scheme could threaten the character of historic city

By Michael McCarthy
Environment Correspondent

WINCHESTER College, Britain's oldest public school, may net £100m from a huge housing development that could seriously damage the character of the historic cathedral city.

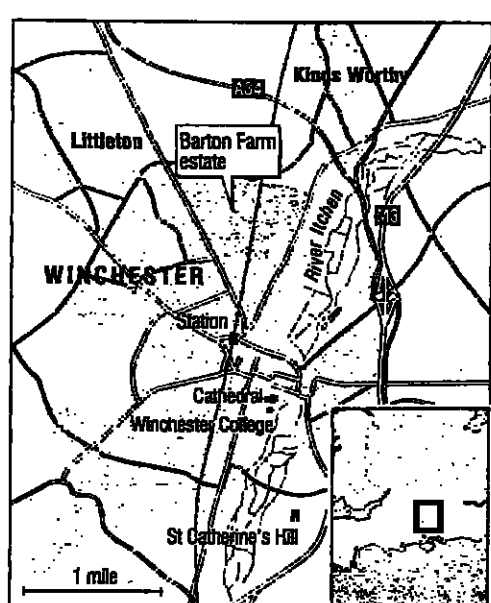
The college has let it be known that it is prepared to sell its 300-acre Barton Farm estate on the edge of Winchester, which it says has potential for 2,000 houses, if the land becomes zoned for residential development. Local surveyors say that in the current booming land market, each house plot would be worth £50,000.

However, the development would destroy a substantial "green wedge" on the north side of the city – the opposite side from the college – and seriously damage the city's character, according to a government planning inspector who last year threw out an initial attempt by the college to have the site zoned for housing, with scathing criticism.

Undaunted, the college is now making it clear that it remains willing to sell the land, and the huge pressure for housing space in Hampshire may yet give it another opportunity.

It could be part of Hampshire County Council's forthcoming structure plan, which will allocate planned housing across the county for the years 2001 to 2011, starting with a crucial meeting today.

The college's willingness to allow Barton Farm's rolling chalk downland to be covered



Critics say selling off Barton Farm to make way for a housing development would alter the character of the city (top and right), but the college, Britain's oldest public school (left), is sticking to its decision
Photographs: John Lawrence; Newsteam

with bricks and mortar is producing all-party concern in Winchester.

"It's shameful," said Patrick Davies, leader of the Labour group on the city council. "This would completely undermine the character of Winchester if it goes ahead."

"I think it's appalling," said Mrs Pat Edwards, a former Tory chairman of the city council planning committee and now a senior member of the Winchester Preservation Trust. "It's well away from the college, so I suppose it doesn't bother them. It's just an easy way for them to make a lot of money."

To do so, William of Wykeham's 14th-century foundation, whose 675 pupils enjoy, for fees of £14,000 a year, the highest academic standards, exquisite medieval buildings, and the water meadows of the River Itchen, has teamed up with a property development company from Staines, Middlesex, called Cala Homes (South) Ltd.

Together they are trying to take advantage of the vibrant market for housing land in Hampshire, worth £750,000 an acre – once planning permission is given.

In 1995, the government

inspector who backed the council's rejection of the scheme pointedly referred to what it would destroy.

"Winchester is characterised by long wedges and fingers of countryside running into the city," he wrote. "These create the green setting for which the city is famous."

Barton Farm was one such, he said, it made a big contribution to the character of the north side of the city, and housing on it would be substantially intrusive. It would bring the urban edge of the city out into the countryside "in an unacceptable manner,

thereby seriously affecting the setting and character of Winchester."

Today, after more than a year's discussion, Hampshire County Council's planning committee is likely to decide on the number of houses Hampshire is committed to build in the period 2001 to 2011. The figure put forward by the controlling Tory group is likely to be 42,400.

However, government planning inspectors who reported last year on the draft of the county's structure plan said that the figure should be 56,000, and John Prescott, the

deputy prime minister and environment secretary, could still intervene to restore this.

If the latter figure is chosen, reserve areas for major housing development in the county will be needed, and north Winchester, which centres on Barton Farm, will be one of them: it was visited by councillors from Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton on 9 March.

The following month, an interview with the college's estates bursar, Robin Chute, appeared out of the blue in Winchester's weekly newspaper, the *Hampshire Chronicle*, in

which he reiterated the college's willingness to sell.

He was reported as saying: "We have told the county we will make available our land at Barton Farm for housing if directed. We have got to think about how to make the most of our assets."

The college needed large sums to maintain its Grade 1 listed ancient buildings and to replenish its foundation funds, he told the newspaper.

Mr Chute was not available for comment at the weekend, but his colleague Bill Organ, the college bursar, confirmed that the land would still be sold

if it were designated for housing. "If the council, in their wisdom, decide there should be housing to the north of Winchester, we will liaise with them to see that the housing is of the most sensitive kind that can be there, and that it meets the needs of the local people," he said.

He confirmed that the number of houses the college envisaged was 2,000. "If the county decided they wanted to develop the entire farm, you could probably get that number in," he said.

Mr Organ said he did not know how much the land would be worth. However, Winchester's leading land valuer, Hume Johnson, a partner in James Harris, the city's 150-year-old firm of chartered surveyors, said it would be worth £50,000 per plot.

"If they were to put that land on the market, they would be knocked over in the rush of developers," he said. "The market here is extremely buoyant." Another surveyor confirmed his figure, saying: "This would be magic money. The market is red-hot."

Winchester College is described in a current guide to public schools as "a marvellous school for robust, able boys." The atmosphere is said to be "friendly, stimulating, decidedly intellectual", and the teaching "outstanding", offering several languages, compulsory Latin and exceptionally strong maths, science and computing.

Environmental studies, however, is not in the curriculum.

TVs' top women fight for current affairs role

By Janine Gibson
Media Correspondent

THE major ITV regional companies will bid this week for a new £10m current affairs series which is expected to be the flagship of serious news coverage on the network.

Six bidders will line up to pitch for the prime-time, hour-long weekly current affairs contract, said to be worth £10m a year to the victor. Although bidders have been warned not to compete to sign deals with star presenters in order to keep costs down, several key names in television current affairs are said to be involved in the bids, including Kirsty Wark, Trevor MacDonald and Sue Lawley.

The new series has been tentatively mooted to air at 10pm if and when *News at Ten* is split into two half-hour bulletins at 6.30pm and

11pm. ITV has given no official notification of the programme's scheduling, but bidders say they have been nudged towards "that kind of slot".

Whichever tender emerges on top, *News at Ten* producer ITN will work with the winner, lending editorial support, news footage and resources to the series. That is where the common ground ends.

The leading contenders are Granada Television and Carlton Television. Granada is rumoured to be banking on *Desert Island Discs* presenter, Sue Lawley to provide the necessary gravitas. The Granada bid is believed to focus around the long running *World in Action*, which has been at the centre of rumours about its future following the abrupt departure of its editor.

Also part of the Granada Media

Group, Yorkshire Television last week confirmed that it had signed a long-term agreement to bring arguably ITV's most famous investigative reporter, Roger Cook, out of retirement. The deal guarantees at least two separate hour-long specials from Cook early next year.

Granada's main rival, Carlton Television, has mooted the "dream team" of Channel 5's headline-grabbing news anchor Kirsty Young and *News at Ten* mainstay Trevor MacDonald in an attempt to hold on to the traditional audience, but also pull in some younger viewers. Carlton's bid is named 24.7.

Sources within ITV consider Carlton's bid unlikely to triumph this week, despite a strong team. ITV has three major factual series to commission this year: the *ITV Debate* show, a consumer holiday series



Kirsty Wark is a good bet to host ITV's current affairs show

and this current affairs flagship. Carlton is currently lined up to produce the first two – three might look like favouritism.

A favoured outsider is Scottish Television, which has teamed up with a Glasgow-based independent production company, Wark Clements. The bidders declined to comment on whether the independent's co-founder and *Newsnight* anchor Kirsty Wark features in their proposal, but Wark has been spotted in and around ITV's headquarters of late.

Gates says 'I am innocent', and gets ready to fight biggest antitrust case

By David Usborne
in New York

A DEFIANT Bill Gates yesterday declared that Microsoft, the company that has made him the world's richest man, was innocent of charges being laid against it by the United States government and was ready to fight to defend itself in what promises to be one of the biggest anti-trust court cases in American history.

Mr Gates spoke out after last-ditch negotiations between Microsoft and government lawyers ended in abrupt failure on Saturday. It now seems certain that lawsuits will be filed against the company this morning by the US Justice Department as well as by the attorneys general of about 20 US states.

The simple act of filing the lawsuits is likely to cast a chill on the US hi-tech sector and could trigger a sharp sell-off in stock markets this

morning, some Wall Street analysts warned last night.

Microsoft said that it would begin shipping Windows 98 to computer makers today and that it would stick to its deadline of 25 June for having it in computer shops.

The government and the 20 states are expected to accuse Microsoft of illegally abusing its dominant position in the operating system market to restrict consumer choice and to extend its grip to the Internet sector by flattening all potential competitors, most notably arch-rival Netscape Communications.

A key concern for government lawyers is Microsoft's ability to "bundle" additional functions of its own into the Windows start-up menu, such as the "Internet Explorer" browser that gives users direct access to the World Wide Web. Thus few consumers pause even to consider the alternative "Navigator" devel-

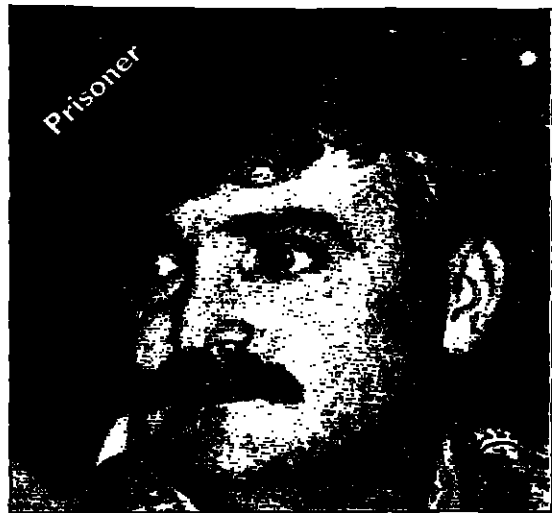
oped by Netscape. In a video-taped message distributed by Microsoft, Mr Gates said he was "very disappointed" by the collapse of the peace talks. "Microsoft is innocent of any of these charges and we're certainly going to defend ourselves vigorously," he said.

Sources close to the meetings, however, suggested that they had broken up only after Mr Gates himself ordered his lawyers to withdraw concessions they had put on the table. Mr Gates is thought to have been enraged by demands that Microsoft actually incorporate Netscape's Navigator browser as a function automatically appearing on the Windows 98 menu. The request was dismissed as "simply outrageous, over the top," by Microsoft spokesperson, Greg Shaw. It would, he said, be "like telling Coke that they have to have three cans of Pepsi in every six pack".

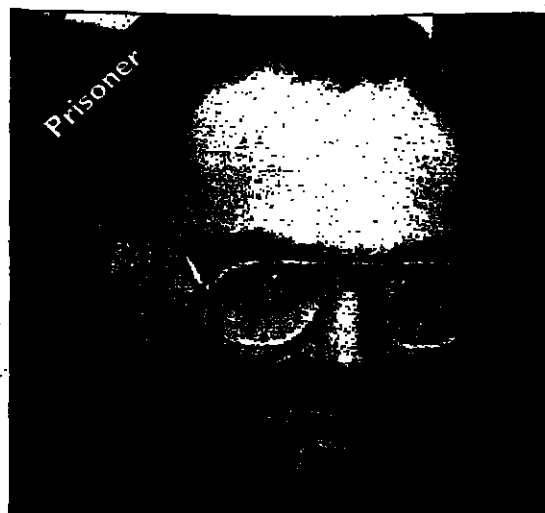
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These are crucial days for the Good Friday agreement, which goes before the electorate in Northern Ireland on Friday. David McKittrick, Ireland correspondent, looks at the early release of prisoners, a key issue for the Protestant community



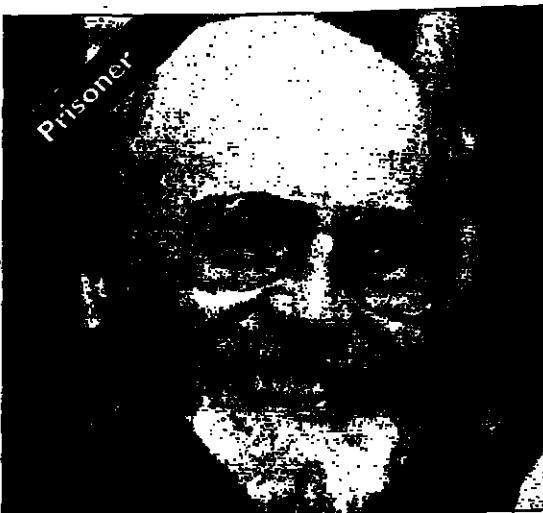
Michael Stone is serving a life sentence for six murders and four attempted murders, his attack on a republican funeral at Miltown in March 1988 got graphic and international coverage in the media. Last week he appeared at a rally supporting the Yes vote.



Patrick Magee was part of an IRA team which almost succeeded in assassinating Margaret Thatcher and other Cabinet ministers at the Grand Hotel in Brighton in October 1984. Five people died.



William Moore was one of the Shankill Butchers gang which carried out a series of sectarian murders, some of them involving sadistic torture. Moore pleaded guilty to 11 murders. He has been out of jail on day release, doing community service in Belfast.



Hugh Doherty and the Balcombe Street gang carried out about 50 bombings and shootings in the early 1970s and killed at least 16 people. Their jail sentences totalled more than 2,000 years. Last week, they appeared at the Sinn Féin meeting which endorsed the "yes" vote.



Thomas McErlan, one of the mourners, was killed in the attack. His mother Sally (above) was angry at seeing Stone at the rally in Ulster Hall. She said: "I don't think he feels any remorse. He killed my son and killed other people. I certainly don't think he should be released."



Harvey Thomas, who was the organiser of the Tory party conference that year, survived the blast without serious injuries despite being thrown up to the ceiling back down again. Mr Thomas said Magee should serve his time for all the pain and suffering he had caused.



Cornelius Neeson, a 49-year-old bingo-caller, was attacked by the Shankill Butchers. One of the gang, scouting for a Catholic victim, struck Mr Neeson with a hatchet and then hit him repeatedly. William Moore then kicked him viciously about the head, face and upper body.



Gordon Hamilton-Fairley, a cancer specialist, was killed in October 1975. His daughter Dr Diana Hamilton-Fairley is campaigning for a yes vote. She said: "People in Northern Ireland must find a way to live in peace and I believe the peace agreement must be supported with a resounding yes."

Protesters put ancient law on trial in Europe

By Ian Burrell
Home Affairs Correspondent

HELEN STEEL, one of the protesters who took on fast food giant McDonald's in the longest-running libel trial in English legal history, will today make a court challenge to the government over its 600-year-old breach of the peace legislation.

Ms Steel will appear before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg to claim that her arrest and detention for attempting to disrupt a grouse shoot was a breach of her human rights. She is among six plaintiffs who are claiming that the breach of the peace law, which dates back to 1361, is being used by police to deny people their right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly.

The cases are being supported by the civil-rights organisation, Liberty. Philip Leach, Liberty's director of law and policy, said that because the law had never been defined by parliament, its meaning was vague and open to wide interpretation.

"This effectively makes it impossible for protesters to stay within the law," he said.

Ms Steel was arrested during a protest at a grouse shoot in Whitby, north Yorkshire, in 1992. She was charged with causing a breach of the peace and was detained for 44 hours to prevent any further breach. After refusing to be bound over, she was jailed for 28 days.

Also challenging the law in Strasbourg are three protesters, Andrea Needham, David Polden and Christopher Cole, arrested while distributing leaflets during a London demonstration against the sale of fighter helicopters. Another challenge will come from Rebecca Lush, detained after being arrested during a protest against the M11 extension in east London.

All the cases will now be heard in court, together with that of Sally McLeod, who is challenging the use of the breach of the peace law to justify police actions in a matrimonial dispute.

The European Commission of Human Rights ruled in April 1997 that there had been no violation of human rights in respect of the Steel and Lush cases but conceded that there had in relation to the helicopter protesters.

Ms McLeod is challenging the Commission's finding in 1997 that the police entering her flat to help her husband retrieve his belongings did not amount to a violation of her human rights.

Killers who hold Ulster vote to ransom

ONE of the ironies of the present wave of Unionist disapproval to the idea of early release of prisoners is that Northern Ireland has for many years had the most liberal prison policy in the UK.

For well over a decade prisoners have benefited from release schemes markedly more lenient than those in operation in Britain or indeed in the Irish Republic. The approach has caused very little political controversy, with almost all parties either openly or quietly in favour of it.

In the context of the Good Friday agreement, however, Protestants and Unionists questioned for opinions cite the proposed early release of prisoners as their main reason for intending to vote No in Friday's referendums.

The actual numbers involved have received little attention. The figures show that approximately 400 prisoners with paramilitary associations are likely to benefit from the proposed arrangements, to a greater or lesser degree.

Overall, no official figures are available for the numbers who have over the past three decades been to prison for paramilitary offences. A rough estimate, however, comes up with a figure of around 13,000 who have been behind bars.

A precise figure can be given for those who have been released after serving life sentences, almost all of which were imposed for murder. 408 lifers, half republicans and half loyalists, are now free after serving sentences varying from eleven years to

20 years. The lifers release scheme began in 1984 with the support of almost all parties, including that of the Rev Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionists, which takes greatest exception to the release proposals.

Over the years criticism of the system from the victims and their relatives has been muted and a majority of victims who have spoken publicly in recent weeks appear to be in favour of a Yes referendum vote.

The scheme is regarded as a success for a number of reasons, partly because instances of re-offending have been minimal, and partly because lifers were influential in bringing about the paramilitary ceasefires.

Among those released already have been most members of the infamous Shankill Butchers gang,

who in the 1970s were jailed for 19 murders, including a series of killings of Catholics killed with knives and cleavers.

One loyalist who has been released was actually sentenced to death in the early 1970s for the murder of a policeman. Among the republicans released are many jailed for killing soldiers and police officers.

This policy has been in striking contrast to penal policy in Britain, where the Thatcher government made it clear that those jailed for terrorist murders could expect to serve at least 20 years behind bars.

The Good Friday agreement sets out a programme to benefit those prisoners whose paramilitary organisations maintain a complete ceasefire. A new body will consider the cases

of prisoners on an individual basis, with provisions to keep inside those judged to represent a continuing threat. The intention is that prisoners will receive a "discount" of one-third of the period they would have previously expected to serve.

Anyone still in custody in July 2000 would be released at that point, provided their organisations continue to observe ceasefires.

Releases are to be on licence, the authorities reserving the power to recall those who go back to terrorist activity.

Those who expect their freedom include some of the best-known republican and loyalist inmates of the Maze prison.

Similar arrangements will operate in the Irish Republic, where repub-

lican prisoners such as the Balcombe Street gang will be freed. Northern Ireland's jails were in any event emptying as longer-term prisoners reached the end of their sentences and the flow of convictions in the courts lessened as the general level of violence tailed off over the last four years.

The Maze prison presently holds 88 lifers and 232 serving other sentences, with a further 87 on remand. Of these, 19 lifers and 118 others would in any event be released by July 2000, which means they will benefit only marginally from the release scheme. Assuming there are no new convictions, only 16 prisoners would have remained inside by the year 2005.

Tomorrow, the reform of the Royal Ulster Constabulary

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Blair wins union support for employment reforms

However, Ken Jackson, right-wing leader of the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union, declared his unequivocal acceptance of the proposals in the *Independent On Sunday*, declaring that it was a triumph of "social partnership" between government, unions and employers.

—Barrie Clement

PAEDOPHILE child-killer Sidney Cooke is to be questioned by police about the death 14 years ago of a seven-year-old boy. Cooke, who is being held in protective police custody and is said to be living in fear as a result of public anger at his release last month from prison, is to be quizzed over the death of Mark Tildesley, the *Mail on Sunday* reported yesterday. Mark vanished from Wokingham, Berkshire, after visiting a funeral in June 1984. The paper says Cooke, who police believe was part of a paedophile gang that abducted, abused and strangled the boy, will be asked where the body is buried.

It is also seen as a reward for his long record in entertaining troops in the past.

Police yesterday confirmed they were reviewing the case of Mary Gallagher, found dead with her throat cut at the age of 17, but said inquiries were at an early stage. They confirmed a man aged 39 was detained on Friday, but said he had been released without charge. A man who allegedly told relatives he killed her is said to have voluntarily given a DNA sample which is being tested at a laboratory in The Hague which can extract DNA from samples despite the lapse of many years.

FOUR ticket-holders scooped Saturday's night £11.8m National Lottery rollover draw, each winning £2,969,954. The winning jackpot numbers were 2, 4, 6, 10, 34 and 44 with the bonus number 21.

On the ocean bed four wavy sea cucumbers showcases reveal Royal College of Art designs on a sea theme. There are huge speakers shaped like the Nautilus shell. A weather-reactive alarm clock, the world's first radar reflective emergency rescue kit with a kite, Red or Dead fashion label marine life clothing, and an inflatable octopus wearing



Photograph: Reuters

In his slipstream there are three members of Panel 2000, the group of advisers to the Foreign Office on Britain's image abroad: Zeinab Badawi from Channel 4, John Sorrell, chair-

The sponsor Allied Distributors is anxious to transfer to a Lisbon club when Expo shut at 2.30am. Our man in Lisbon, Roger Westbrook, knows all

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department of Trade and Industry each contributed £1m towards Expo '98, but it is a drop in the ocean. Expo blocks blatant advertising. As governments all over the world have budget shortfalls on

With Expos coming up every two years the world's imagination is sorely strained. This year's theme on oceans gave land-locked Zimbabwe an excuse not to attend. Zaire white-water-rafted down the Congo and Switzerland glacially showed that it had sourced the world's oceans with meltdown

Cultural events are less important than thrills. Lisbon is still fatigued from one hundred days of culture. This British branding caters for all on time and target with a crowd-pulling show. Expo '92 in Seville, Spain was a graveyard for the DTI officials who organised it. Expo '98 is a diplomatic coup.

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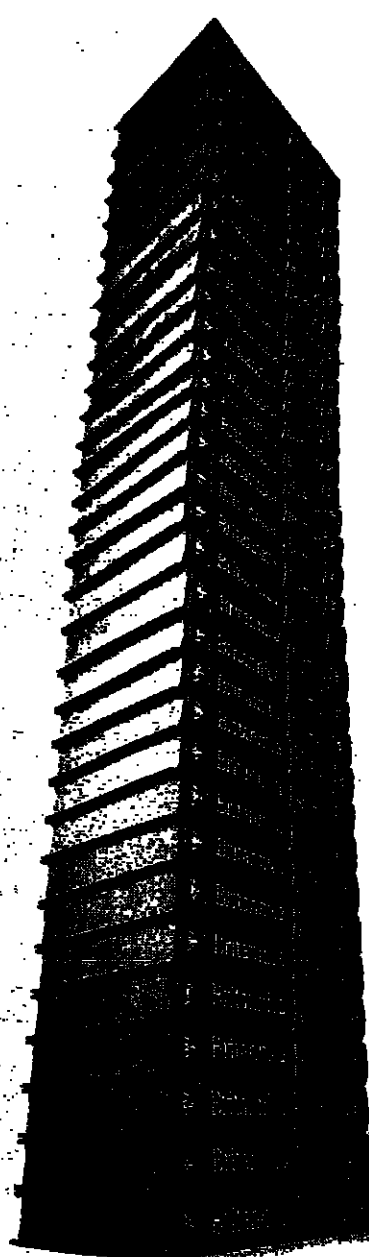


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INDEXES

Secretive world of landlady who is richer than the Queen



The house in Tottenham north London listed as Mark Pears's address. Right: Pensioner Sid Lambert, who received a demand for a 200 per cent rise in his rent Photographs: Neville Elder

By Steve Boggan

LAST month, Clarice Pears, 64, a north London pensioner worth £260m, beat the Queen - net worth £250m - to take fifth place in the *Sunday Times* list of Britain's wealthiest women.

Five days later, Sid Lambert, a 78-year-old widower, was told that his landlord wanted to increase his rent from about £82 a week to £250 - a rise of more than 200 per cent.

Although their fortunes are very different, the two pension-

ers are connected by a run-down two-bedroom flat in Hylda Court, a fading but architecturally impressive mansion block in north London. The connection is simple: Mrs Pears is the landlord, Mr Lambert the tenant.

Mr Lambert is one of a group of tenants with protected rights (whose rents must be approved by the Rent Officer Service) in the 30-flat building who are finding life increasingly difficult under the stewardship of Mrs Pears's company, Bankway Properties, part of a

vast network of companies ultimately owned by William Pears Family Holdings.

This company stunned the City when, in 1996, it paid out a £42.4m dividend to Mrs Pears, her three sons, Mark, David and Trevor, and a number of family trusts. Even after such an outpouring of cash, the company still boasts £112m net assets and profits after tax of £11.9m.

Yet the family is astonishingly secretive. Mrs Pears is reclusive and staff at the family's four-storey brick headquarters in a mews in Hampstead, north London, say her sons are not often to be seen. Three of the four family members list their address as Clive House, Old Brewery Mews, Hampstead - the company headquarters. Only Mark has listed another address, in Tottenham, north London.

Estimates of their wealth vary. Their estates manager, Nick Stanley, denies one report that they owned more than 10,000 properties across the country, but one housing officer said she believed the figure was as high as 40,000.

The residents of Hylda Court and the Pears family came into each other's lives in March 1996 when the company bought the mansion block,

by the Rent Officer Service. When the Pears family took over Hylda Court, all 30 flats enjoyed protected status. Now, according to the residents, only 17 remain, leaving the vacant flats to be let at much higher rents.

"They just want us out," said Mr Lambert, pointing to his damp walls, grimy kitchen, jammed windows and his bathroom cold water tap from which comes only a trickle. "When I got the demand for more rent, I got a hell of a shock. What will I do? I've lived here since 1959."

Other tenants tell of demands for arrears which they describe as "bogus". The managing agents, B Bailey & Co, claim there have been disagreements because the previous agents, Keningtons, failed to pass on accounts. Keningtons confirmed that all details were passed on upon completion of the sale of the building.

Nevertheless, tenants who believed they owed nothing have been threatened with eviction.

Malcolm Collins, 63, and his wife, Suzanne, 66, have lived at Hylda Court for 34 years. Bankway Properties has applied to increase their rent from £113 a week to £250 and is suing them for £1,350, which they claim they do not owe.

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1	Charles Pears	(12) £1.1m	25	Lord Leighton	(12) £1.1m
2	Lady Leighton	(12) £1.1m	26	Lady Leighton	(12) £1.1m
3	Ann Bland	(14) £1.1m	27	Lady Leighton	(12) £1.1m
4	Frederick Leighton	(14) £1.1m	28	Lady Leighton	(12) £1.1m
5	Charles Pears	(12) £1.1m	29	Lady Leighton	(12) £1.1m
6	The Queen	(20) £250m	30	Lady Leighton	(12) £1.1m

The *Sunday Times* article showing Clarice Pears as Britain's 5th wealthiest woman, ahead of the Queen

a 1930s art-deco style property, for just £1.4m. In comparison with many London buildings, it is relatively well maintained. From the outset, however, the company wanted to make as much money from the property as possible.

"We're not social landlords or a council housing department or a housing association - we're in it to make money," said Mr Stanley. "The idea is to maximise the income from the building. But we have done nothing wrong and we have nothing to be ashamed of. We are simply trying to get the market rate for the flats. The final decision on our application to increase the rents will be with the Rent Officer Service."

Protected tenants, however, a vanishing group of people, are not a lucrative source of income. More lucrative are assured shorthold tenants who have no security of tenure and whose rents do not have to be approved

"The planned rent rise is just pure greed," said Mrs Collins. "This place is like a building site with workers upgrading all the flats they have got empty so they can let them at higher rates. But the workmen don't come anywhere near residents' flats to carry out our repairs."

"That will only happen after we get driven out, when we can no longer afford to live here."

Mr Stanley said there was no question of that. "If these people are pensioners, then they will be entitled to claim Housing Benefit to make up the difference, so they will be okay."

But that will provide little consolation to residents in work or like Tom Sharp, a 47-year-old teacher, in between jobs. He is among those who have received demands for arrears he claims he does not owe. "They told me I owe more than £9,000, which is impossible," he said. "It would mean I had paid nothing since they bought the place."

NHS waiting lists show further rise

A FURTHER rise in National Health Service waiting lists and new figures showing that class sizes are at their highest level for more than 20 years will put pressure on Tony Blair this week to avoid Labour breaking its election pledges, writes Colin Brown.

The figures will be used by cabinet ministers Frank Dobson and David Blunkett to argue for more money for health and education in the Chancellor's comprehensive spending review to be announced in July.

President Bill Clinton yesterday advised Mr Blair on BBC1's *Breakfast with Frost* programme that keeping pledges made in the campaign was one of the priorities for securing a second term of office. Commitments to cutting waiting lists and cutting class

sizes were among Labour's five promises at the general election. But figures published this week will show that around 1.3 million primary school pupils are in classes of 31 or more.

The Secretary of State for Health is expected to announce he will be spending £68m from the £500m already allocated to reducing waiting lists on schemes to allow patients to leave hospital for care at home. The figures are expected to show a rise of a further 40,000 patients on the waiting list since the start of the year, pushing the total waiting up to 1.5 million patients.

Labour promised to cut 100,000 off the waiting lists, but they went up by 100,000 in the first nine months. Opposition parties last night demanded an urgent Commons statement from Mr Dobson.

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Japanese PoW who refused to forget

Memories led veteran back to Thailand, reports Ethan Casey in Bangkok

WHEN he returned to Kanchanaburi, two hours west of Bangkok, to live in 1987, former British prisoner of war Trevor Dakin hoped to make a personal peace with the horrors of war he had endured there under the occupying Japanese more than four decades earlier.

"I thought by facing up to the most horrific period of my life that I'd be able to put the bad memories behind me," Dakin, a former army corporal who died on 15 April told journalist Micol Brooke in 1990: "I burned bridges back home to come here. I expect to live and die out here. But not before telling my tale."

The visit of Emperor Akihito of Japan to Britain next week could be overshadowed by former prisoners of war who will demonstrate to demand a formal apology from the Japanese for their behaviour - an apology that Dakin always wanted.

His tale of life in a Japanese prison camp was so harrowing that even half a century later, telling it remained his only way to ease the pain. "It's a form of therapy," he admitted.

"He got lots of backpackers dropping in to see him," remembered Brooke, a 35-year-old Australian whose articles in the *Bangkok Post* newspaper first brought Dakin to public attention, and who became his close friend. "He loved it. It gave him a reason for being there; he was doing something constructive."

Some 16,000 British and other Allied prisoners of war and 100,000 Asian slave labourers died of disease, malnutrition, execution and torture building what became known as the Death Railway, a line from

man named Nagase Takashi read it and wrote to him. Nagase became well known a few years ago as the torturer of Eric Lomax, author of the best-selling memoir *The Railway Man*. Brooke arranged for Nagase, who has made seeking forgiveness from his former victims his life's mission, to meet Dakin at the Kanchanaburi War Cemetery in 1994. In his book *Captive of the River Kwai* [sic] (1995), Brooke quotes Dakin telling Nagase: "I respect you because of your tireless mission of atonement."

Until Dakin died, he and Nagase were planning to tour Japan together this August, to lecture schoolchildren about the Death Railway.

"Some people were suspicious: What was Trevor's motive for being friends with Nagase?" says Brooke. "But I had seen him give lectures to groups of visiting Japanese, and he pulled no punches... He was just being open-minded and trying to get through to the next generation of Japanese."

Dakin's experience living in Thailand frustrated him. "He didn't understand the Thais, and he was upset that the Thais didn't understand him," said Brooke. "He had a deep personal reason for being here, and the significance of that just didn't dawn on many Thais, including his wife... The symbol of the cultural gulf was the tourism and the annual River Kwai Festival, when they reenact the bombing raid that blew up the bridge, which he thought was a honky-tonk carnival."

Even more offensive to Dakin was the award-winning 1957 film *Bridge on the River*



Trevor Dakin as an army corporal (right) and (third from left) embracing Nagase Takashi (second left) on the bridge over the Kwai at VJ Day celebrations. Main photograph: Anat Givon



The landmark bridge over the River Kwai, scene of the bombing raid. Photograph: PA

Thailand into Burma that Japan needed for its planned invasion of India. Dakin, who had been captured in the fall of Singapore in February 1942, was one of the lucky ones.

"When the war ended they wept for joy," said Brooke. "Whenever he told that story he always broke down crying. He would quote the sergeant major, Sandy Goodwin, who walked into the barracks and said, 'Boys, you're free.'"

Dakin returned home to Luton, in Bedfordshire, but had difficulty rejoining society. "I didn't like what I saw happening to England," he said. "For 667 I was able to start a new life in Canada."

There he worked selling encyclopedias for the next 30 years. "He said he learnt the art of salesmanship by trading with the Thais for food when he sneaked out of the camp during the war," recalled Brooke.

The two met by chance in a Kanchanaburi bakery in 1989. "No one had ever interviewed him before. He was just living there, completely unknown," Brooke remembered. "And without his story to tell, I wouldn't have written my book."

When Brooke published an article about the Death Railway in a Japanese newspaper, a

Kwai. "It was disgraceful," he told Brooke. "There was never any bloody commando raid or any rubbish like that."

Dakin's health began to fail early this year. "It was a real experience watching Trevor dying and fighting for life," said Brooke. "He had everything to live for. And he was fighting for life just as he did during his captivity, when all you can do is lie there saying 'I'm going to live, I'm going to live.'"

Dakin left no will, so after contacting his children in Canada and negotiating with reluctant local officials, Brooke was left to carry out his wishes, cremating him and scattering his ashes near Chang Kai War Cemetery.

Chang Kai, four kilometres from Kanchanaburi, occupies part of the site of the PoW camp in which Dakin was incarcerated.

Asked if his friend ever did find peace, Brooke replied: "Probably not. Maybe periodically, for a few hours at a time. But overall he remained very confused and a bit resentful."

Dakin would have turned 78 years old on 15 May. "There have been a few Second World War veterans who have come back to Thailand to live," said Brooke. "But he was the last."

Excellent News. (The BBC has just won more awards).

The BBC warmly congratulates all Royal Television Society Award winners who won on Thursday night.

Award Category	Winners	Service
Journalism Awards		
Judges' Award	Peter Snow	BBC News
Journalist of the Year	Ireland Correspondent Denis Murray	BBC News
Interview of the Year	Jeremy Paxman: for his Newsnight interview with Michael Howard	BBC News
News Event Award	The Death of Diana	BBC News
Joint Winner		
Current Affairs Award	Correspondent Special: Getting Away with Murder	BBC Broadcast
International	Panorama: Valentina's Story	BBC Broadcast
Joint Winners		
Daily News Magazine	BBC Midlands Today	BBC Midlands
Sports Awards		
Regional Sports News	BBC Look North: Kevin Keegan's Resignation	BBC North East & Cumbria

We would also like to congratulate the BBC Winners at the inaugural Ethnic Minority Media Awards

Media Professional/Personality of the Year	George Alagiah	BBC News
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Pupils return to school that nobody wanted

A boy of six who has been in a class of his own since February is to get company. Ben Russell reports

THE strange tale of the school with just one pupil will take a further twist today. Three sets of parents have decided to return their children to Potter Heigham School in Norfolk, quadrupling the size of the class at a stroke.

Six-year-old Richard Marlin has been the primary school's only pupil since February. Other parents withdrew their children after the school was declared as failing by Ofsted inspectors, but Richard's parents sent him back saying he had been bullied at his new school in the neighbouring village of Catfield.

Norfolk county councillors had decided to close the school, which is costing £3,200 a month to keep open, but now villagers hope to persuade their local authority that it has a future.

Lynne Sheppard, chairman of the governors at Potter Heigham, last night praised the work of the school's acting head Stephen Bloore, and its new teacher Julie Hornal, who have been teaching Richard since February. "A group of parents got together and decided they were going to send their children back. They are going to keep Richard company."

"We have had a senior county head teacher who has been doing a brilliant job. The main criticism of Ofsted was that the school needed



Richard Marlin, who will no longer be the only pupil at Potter Heigham school when he is joined by three friends today. Photograph: David Rose

cised the decision to close the school. She said: "It seemed to be a case of 'go quietly and we'll transport your children wherever you want them to go', rather than solve the problems at the school."

Meanwhile, children as young as four are being given lessons in business under a new scheme imported from America which may prove a model for schools across Britain.

Hundreds of children in nursery and primary classes are being given an introduction to the world of work by businessmen and women under the pilot scheme pioneered by Young Enterprise.

The project, involving 47 schools in Northern Ireland, is being closely watched by educationalists on the mainland after Tony Blair threw his weight behind "tuckshop tycoons" by backing a report which recommended extending business education into primary schools and universities.

Thousands of secondary school pupils already gain experience of the world of work through the popular Young Enterprise scheme, setting up their own mini-businesses with shareholders and dividends.

The Northern Ireland experiment takes the concept further, bringing the idea of running your own business into the reception class, with sessions for four-year-olds.

long term leadership. We have now got a good management there."

She said several children were already signed up to start at the school in September. "The confidence in the new head is very high"

The new arrivals, Ryan Salt, Ashley Durrant and Eve Sheppard, all aged six, are all friends of Richard. Parent Dave Sheppard said: "We were told that the staff problems and other difficulties at the school were

almost impossible to deal with. But when Richard Marlin came back, all the things we'd been told couldn't happen did. A wonderful acting head teacher appeared who has transformed the school in the space

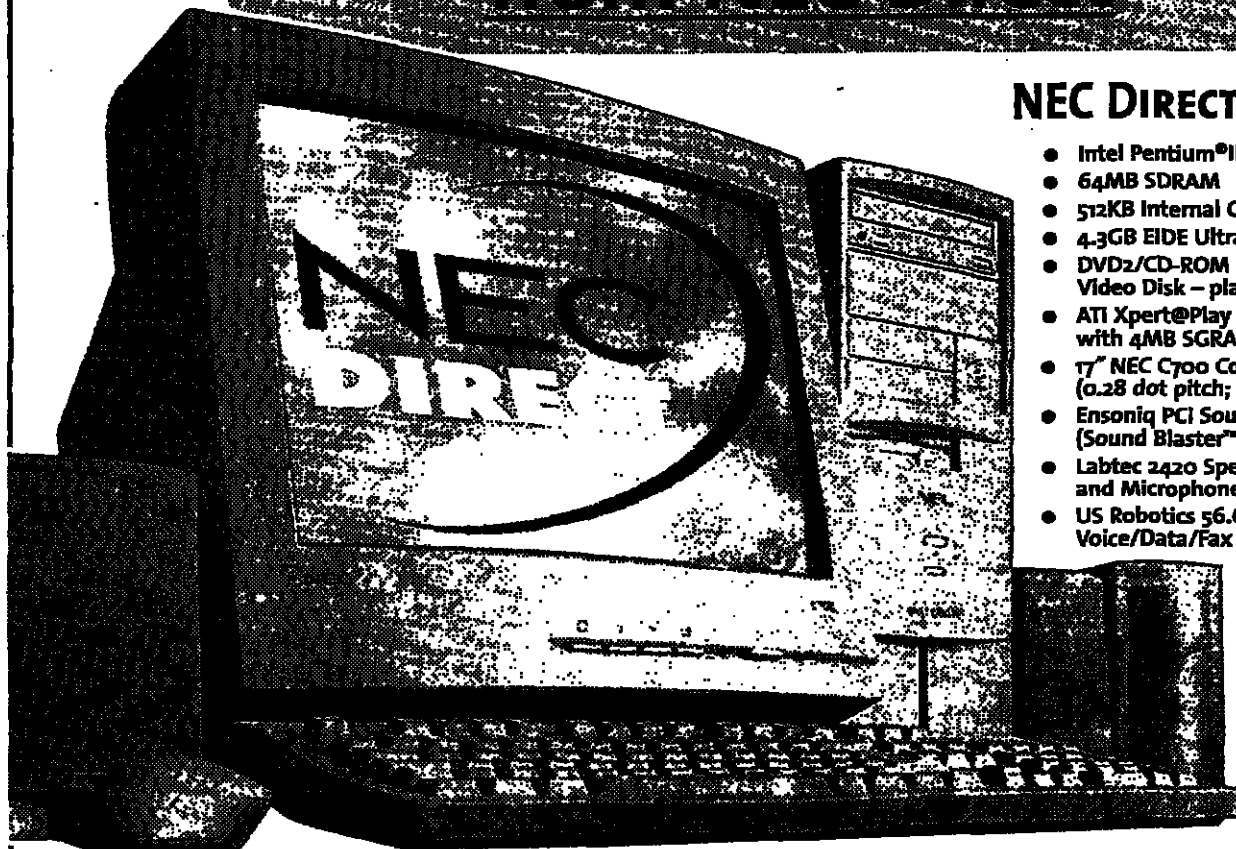
of a few months. This is the parents' first step in showing their strength of feeling and confidence in the school. It is now for central government to show its commitment to small village schools."

Another father, Graeme Salt, said: "We are putting our child into the school now to show them that there is a commitment amongst parents to keep it open."

Richard's mother, Angela, crit-

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UK funds Colombian in human rights row

By Andrew Buncombe and Toby Foltz

A COLOMBIAN politician criticised by human rights campaigners for his support of security groups, many of which have been linked to paramilitary atrocities, has received a Foreign Office grant to study at one of the country's leading universities.

Alvaro Uribe Velez, the former governor of the Antioquia region of the country, is a senior associate member of St Anthony's College, Oxford, where he is attached to the Institute of Latin American Studies. He is researching social policy and education, having been awarded up to £10,000 from the FCO in a Chevening scholarship.

But protesters claim that away from St Anthony's, Mr Uribe Velez's social policy has little regard for democracy.

Last week, Colombian human rights campaigners protested outside the institute. One protester, Oscar Silva, 35, a theatre worker originally from Bogota, said: "We said that he (Uribe Velez) is one of the biggest promoters of the Convivir groups and that during his time as the Governor he has encouraged them."

The Convivir, short for Asociaciones Comunitarias de Vigilancia, or Community Vigilance Associations, were set up towards the end of 1994 to provide information for the state about potential guerrilla activity. But human rights groups say there is evidence many of the groups act as little



Alvaro Uribe Velez: Convivir are honest people

more than death squads, killing any people the Colombian government considers "dissident", including trade unionists. Their creation reflects the growing polarisation of politics in Colombia, where anyone critical of the state faces accusations of being a member of a guerrilla movement which has also been responsible for scores of deaths in a country with one of the highest murder rates in the world. Last year there were 3,000 politically motivated murders.

Last week the European Parliament approved a resolution condemning recent assassinations of human rights workers and calling for the immediate disbanding of the Convivir.

Human rights campaign group Amnesty International said: "The Convivir have been implicated in serious human rights violations. The office of the attorney general has opened

at least 35 criminal investigations into (such) cases ... involving Convivir groups. These represent at most the tip of the iceberg."

One of the worst atrocities took place at the town of La Horqueta in November 1997, when at least 14 people, including two children, were killed. It later transpired that one of the paramilitaries involved in the massacre was the representative of a Convivir group.

A report published earlier this year by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, said: "Information supplied to the office refers to violations of the right to life of ordinary criminals, homeless persons, drug addicts and prostitutes attributed to members of the 'Convivir' associations."

Mr Uribe Velez, tipped to be one of Colombia's leading presidential candidates in 2002, was yesterday unavailable for comment. In the past, however, he has spoken in favour of the Convivir groups. Last year he told *El Tiempo* newspaper: "In exercising constitutional and legal responsibilities to public order by adopting a politics of authority with firmness we have promoted and approved the Convivir associations and the local security fronts. In Antioquia we have 48 Convivir made up of honest people, not criminals. They are different to the guerrillas and paramilitaries because they are committed to human rights."

Sir Marrack Goulding, warden of St Anthony's, said the college was aware of the controversy surrounding Mr Uribe Velez but that they felt it was not a reason for him not to join them. He said: "We would never have admitted him if we thought he was involved in human rights abuses."

The FCO spends around £28m a year on Chevening scholarships, allowing people from around the world who are likely to become influential to study in Britain.

DAILY POEM

From the Kindertotenlieder

By Friedrich Ruckert, translated by Blake Morrison

*I often think they're out walking, that's all.
Any minute they'll be back.
It's a lovely day. Pipe down. Relax.
Listen hard and you'll hear their cries.
They've gone the long way round.
Any minute they'll be back.*

*Relax. Pipe down. It's a lovely day.
A day to savour, a day to explore.
And if they've wandered
further than usual, up the hill,
and have long since ceased to care
about coming home, it doesn't matter,*

*we can soon catch up with them,
they've run ahead, that's all.
When the sun's out on the hill,
we'll catch up with them.
Relax. Pipe down. They're out walking.
Listen hard and you'll hear their cries.*

It's a lovely day, up on the hill.

Blake Morrison has translated five of Friedrich Ruckert's "Songs on the Death of Children" - well known in their setting by Gustav Mahler - for Robert Lepage's new staging of the cycle. The production runs at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith until 30 May.

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Jail bullies thrive on fear and extortion

By Ian Burrell
Home Affairs Correspondent

THEIR favourite targets are the fraggles, the nonces and the muppets. But anyone showing tell-tale signs of fear is a target for violence and extortion for Britain's jail bullies.

A shocking picture of the way prisoners can be victimised and exploited by other inmates has been painted in a study conducted inside prisons and published today.

The scale of the bullying alarmed the researchers from the University of Oxford Centre for Criminological Research who found that 46 per cent of young offenders and 30 per cent of adult prisoners were assaulted, robbed or threatened in any given month.

Kenneth Edgar, one of the report's authors, said: "It's one thing to take people's liberty away, but to put them in conditions where they are not safe is another thing."

The bullies have been categorised into four groups who use different tactics to intimidate prisoners they regard as weaker than themselves.

The "predators" are described as "persistent and calculating" in their efforts to obtain drugs or goods that could be exchanged for drugs. The researchers found that predators enjoyed a high profile on their prison wing and were often popular with staff.

One told the study: "Every day I go to every cell, 60 or 70 of them, and tell them to sort me out. No one refuses me."

Another group, the "fighters", specialised in violent victimisation. "Their desire was primarily for recognition rather than material gain or drugs," said the report.

Business-minded bullies, known as "traders", sold cigarettes to other inmates, luring them into debts which were often enforced with violence.

One trader told the study: "We set targets every week. We had a stock and we never wanted to dip below that stock about 200 cigarettes, every chocolate on the canteen list, tins of Coke, juice ... I would estimate our profits at £40 a week."

The fourth group, the "avengers", were often motivated by feuds which had begun outside prison.

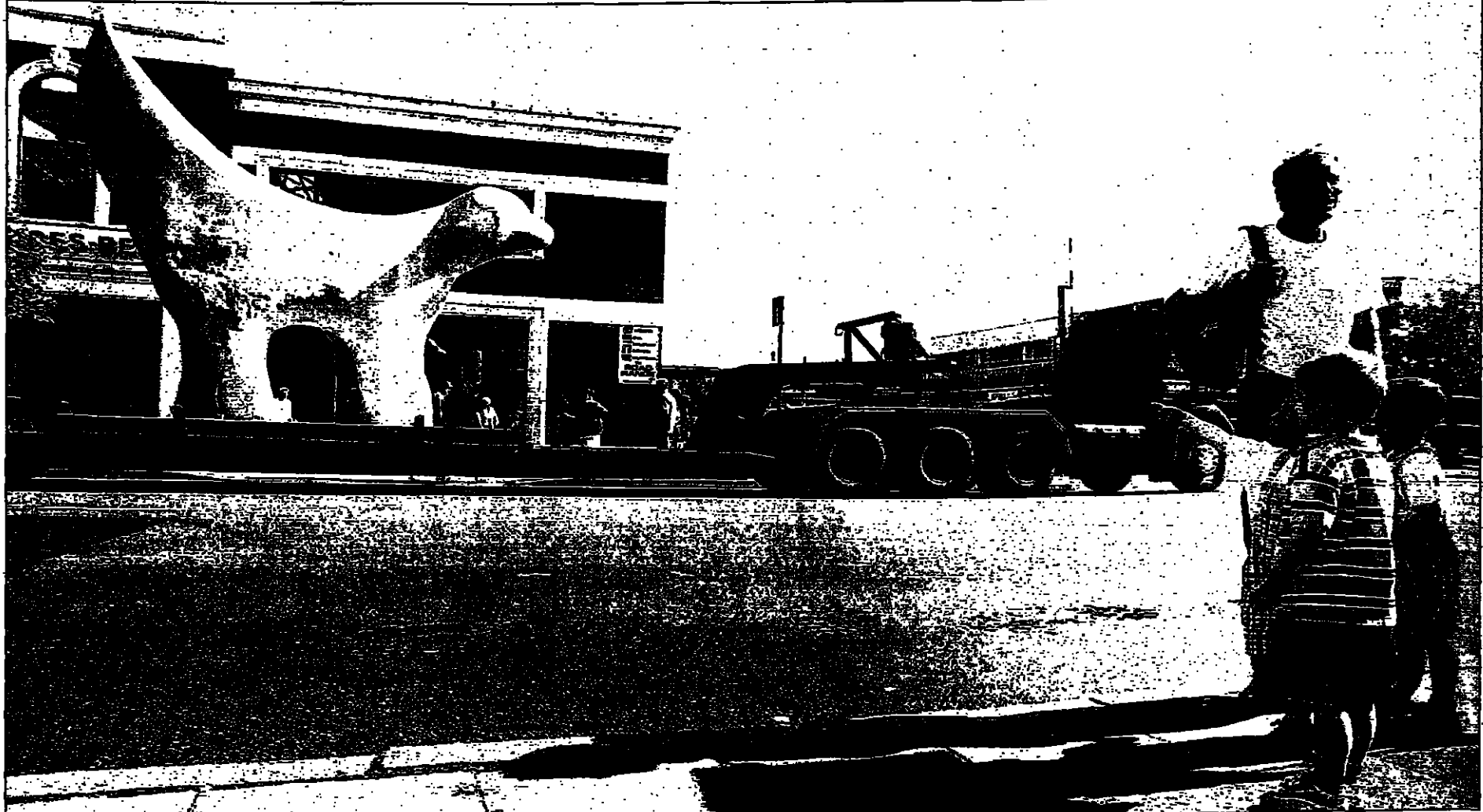
The researchers found that a majority of prisoners - and particularly young offenders - felt that "some kinds" of inmates deserved to be picked on.

Most despised were the "nonces" (sex offenders), followed by the "grassers" (informers). But the researchers also complained that timid or vulnerable prisoners (nicknamed "muppets") and inmates with mental health problems (described in jail as "fraggles") were also subjected to dehumanising language which should be challenged by staff.

The researchers were, however, impressed by the efforts of prison officers in attempting to tackle the problems of bullying. They called on prisons to take greater steps to isolate bullies and move them to units within the jail where their behaviour could be addressed.

The study recommended that victims should be given access to trained counsellors and be able to pass information to staff in the knowledge that it will be treated in confidence. But according to one inmate, there was only one way to escape the bullying. "Fight back," he said. "You've got to stand up to them."

Liverpool goes bananas over yellow sculpture



THE latest bizarre addition to the Liverpool skyline - a giant half-lamb, half-banana sculpture - is manoeuvred into position.

The seven-and-a-half tonne concrete and steel piece, titled *Super Lamb Banana* and designed by the Japanese artist Taro Chiezo, was

craned into place at the Ventilation Building, Pier Head, near the city's Albert Dock, yesterday.

More than five metres high and five metres long, the bright yellow sculpture features a lamb's head and body sweeping into the shape of a banana. It was built by four lo-

cal sculptors Andy Small, Julian Taylor, Ray Stokes and Tommy Reason, using the designer's model.

Mr Small said: "Taro sent us a 10cm model, and we built it on a scale of 50 to 1. It's a playful image, and hopefully represents an exciting, innovative future for our city."

Super Lamb Banana is one of more than 50 works commissioned for the Artranspennine98 exhibition, which opens on 23 May.

Organised by the Tate Gallery Liverpool and the Henry Moore Sculpture Trust in collaboration with private and public sponsors,

the exhibition features the work of more than 50 artists from 15 countries. The work is being shown in museums and more unconventional locations in Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds and Hull, as well as the surrounding countryside.

Photograph: Rich Marsham/mfi

Swipe card spells end for the Giro society

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

THE Giro society could be a thing of the past under proposals being drawn up in Whitehall to introduce an electronic swipe card for claimants of welfare benefits.

The unemployed, low paid and others on benefits could be given the social security cards to use in shops and supermar-

kets, but they could get cash on their accounts over the counter at post offices.

The embattled Cabinet minister David Clark, the Minister for Public Service, who is pioneering the idea, is engaged in a round of talks with the High Street banks to allow the cards to be used in their "hole in the wall" cash machines.

The introduction of cash cards for welfare claimants

could bring an end to the black market in stolen Giro cheques, and give many of those in poverty a personal account for the first time through the Post Office.

Mr Clark has told MPs it is part of the "quiet revolution" he is carrying out in improvements of service to the public. Other ideas he is promoting include making it easier for people to renew their TV licences and road fund "tax discs" by using

swipe cards in machines in shopping malls, rather than queuing at the Post Office.

The minister is fighting to retain his seat in the Cabinet, following speculation that it is likely to go to Peter Mandelson, at present the minister without portfolio, in Tony Blair's next reshuffle. Mr Mandelson told a committee of MPs this week that he would be publishing a Freedom of Information Bill be-

fore the summer recess, in July.

He is also planning to put the majority of Whitehall documents up to classified level of secrecy on a ministerial computer system, which has been tested against hacking. It would allow ministers to read each others' documents.

Labour MPs took the unusual step of coming out in favour of Mr Clark, with a Commons motion timed to co-

incide with his appearance before the Committee on Public Administration, chaired by Labour MP Rhodri Morgan.

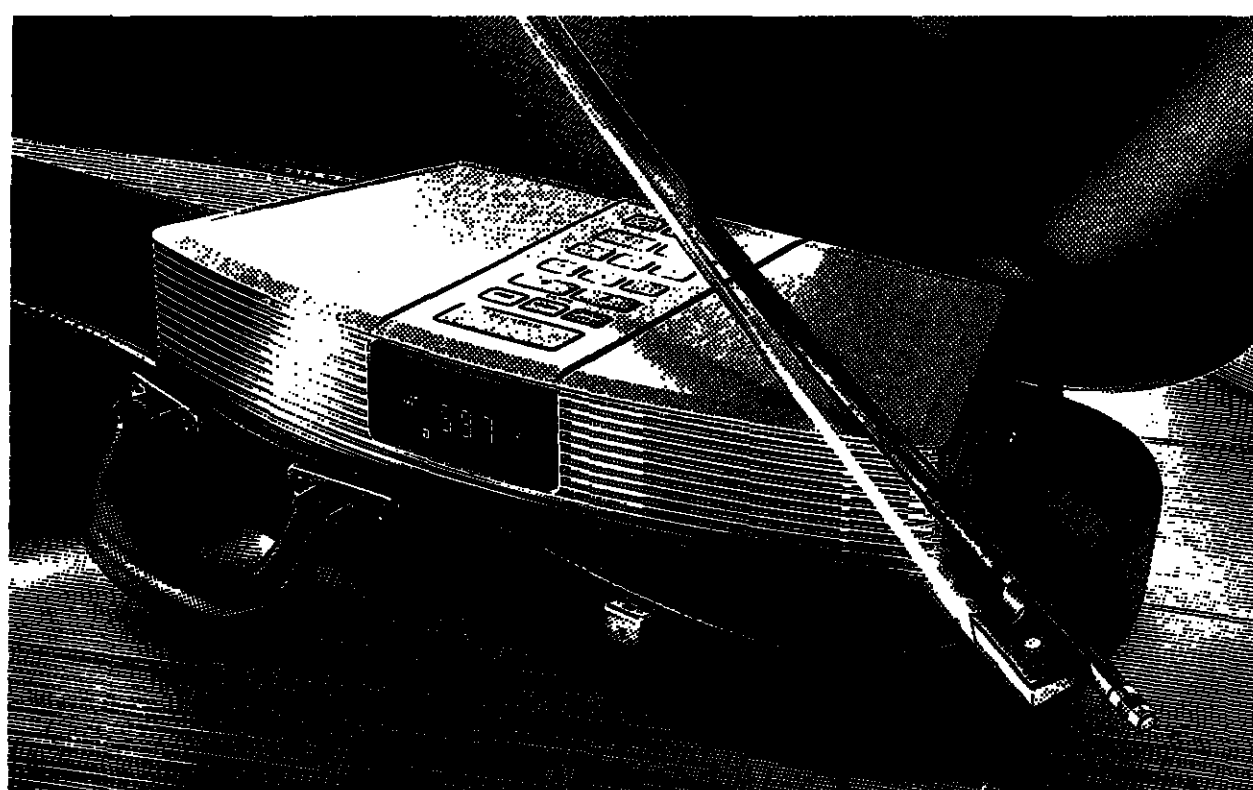
The committee is expected to praise Mr Clark for his work behind the scenes in the Government, but warn that it may not be enough. Peter Bradley, the MP for The Wirral, told Mr Clark: "You talk about a quiet revolution. I would like the volume turned up."

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BOSE

Clinton pleads with Pakistan to hold fire over nuclear tests

by Mary Dejevsky

PRESIDENT Bill Clinton and senior US officials pleaded with Pakistan yesterday not to unleash a nuclear arms race on the Indian Subcontinent by conducting a nuclear test in response to the series conducted by India.

Mr Clinton and his team in Birmingham for the G8 summit had been briefed on the mood in Pakistan's capital Islamabad by Strobe Talbott, the US Deputy Secretary of State, who was dispatched at the head of an emergency American mission to the country immediately after India's action last week.

Pakistan denied an Indian report that it tested a nuclear device yesterday, but said it would go ahead when it was ready. "It's just a question of timing," Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub said. "It's a matter of when, not if. Pakistan will test. The decision has already been taken by cabinet."

In a television interview, during which he also reinforced Tony Blair's call for a "Yes" vote in Northern Ireland, President Clinton said the answer to the problems of India and Pakistan was "not for India to become a nuclear power and then for Pakistan to match it stride for stride."

Setting out a scenario that had China and Russia then moving troops to support Pakistan and India respectively, Mr Clinton said: "It's a nutty way to go, it is not the way to chart the future."

In a second - and unscripted - appeal, immediately after the conclusion of the G8 summit, Mr Clinton told reporters that he still had hopes that Pakistan would not carry out a nuclear test, holding out the promise of enhanced US security assistance for Pakistan if it refrained.

"In the long run," Mr Clinton said, "and indeed before then, the political, the economic and the security interests of Pakistan and Pakistan's standing in the world would be dramatically increased if they walked away from a test. The



Police and supporters of a 'Reclaim the Streets' campaign, timed to coincide with the G8 summit, clash in Birmingham Photograph: John MacBrayne/NTI

whole rest of the world would think they were stronger and would be profoundly impressed."

For people to think that conducting a nuclear test was "a new measure of either national security or national greatness," he said, would be "a terrible signal" to send the world.

Mr Clinton's plaintive tone suggested a recognition that no warning or incentive from the US would dissuade the Pakistani leadership from going ahead with tests.

Mr Talbott declined to set

out publicly the response he had found in Pakistan or the specific arguments he had presented on Mr Clinton's behalf.

But he stressed that the Pakistani leaders he had met - the prime minister, foreign minister and chief of staff of the armed forces - fully understood the considerations against following India's precedent, but reserved the "sovereign right" to decide what to do.

He said he felt "very strongly" that at least when he left Islamabad, Pakistan had not taken a decision. They are, he said, "wrestling with what for

them is an extremely difficult and vexing dilemma" and "clearly regard India's action as directly threatening their national security."

The US is believed to have offered terms for the unfreezing of a consignment of F-16 aircraft that Pakistan has paid for but not received, and also proposed additional security guarantees.

US officials have also spelled out that Pakistan would be subject to US sanctions identical to those imposed on India, but that the effect would be more drastic because of Pak-

istan's greater dependence on aid and foreign loans.

In a formal statement adopted in Birmingham, the Group of Eight condemned India's action, urged future restraint and called on India to move immediately towards signing the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

The Eight, however, could not agree joint action and Pakistan expressed disappointment with a response it regarded as woefully inadequate.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin told President Clinton

he has taken new steps to clamp down on exports of missile technology, a step the America leader hopes will curb Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Mr Yeltsin also pledged to push his parliament to ratify the Start II pact that would cut US and Russian nuclear arsenals.

But Mr Yeltsin appeared confused over the date of a planned summit with Mr Clinton, and it was not clear how he could persuade the Communist majority in the Duma to pass the arms control treaty, which has stalled since it was signed five years ago.

Turmoil abroad hijacks a simple agenda

TONY BLAIR and seven of the most powerful men in the world were closeted at Weston Park in rural Shropshire for much of the G8 meeting. This was the informal session Mr Blair had wanted for "his" global summit.

But in the months of planning for a quieter, simpler summit, the Prime Minister reckoned without the world's unpredictable ways. This year, for the umpteenth time since such world summits were inaugurated at Rambouillet in France in 1975, the agenda was overtaken by events - Indian nuclear tests and riots in Indonesia.

The advance agenda - combating international crime, Third World debt, and employment - was not calculated to produce fireworks. The countryside venue for discussions ensured that the media were kept physically at arm's length. The number of "summitteers" had also been slimmed down by the decision to banish finance and foreign ministers, who met last weekend in London.

But sudden international crises are not so easy to banish.

Blair's plan for informal seclusion went awry, reports Mary Dejevsky in Birmingham

In the five days between the dispersal of the foreign ministers' meeting and last Friday, when the leaders arrived at Birmingham, India conducted five underground nuclear tests. Then Indonesia, recently congratulated for taking the medicine prescribed by the International Monetary Fund, erupted in riots that may topple President Suharto.

Inevitably the summit agenda had to be augmented. The media could not be kept at bay, and the Birmingham summit became a focus for the world.

In fact, hijacked agendas are by now almost a tradition of Group of Seven summits (now eight, to include Russia). Seven years ago, in London, an only half-hidden guest, then Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, turned the spotlight on to his creaking empire and the fragility of his own position, but left disappointed.

Two years ago, at Lyons, the new French President, Jacques Chirac, wanted to concentrate

on social inequity in the developed world - one of the messages from his election campaign. But on the eve of the summit, terrorists bombed a United States barracks building in Saudi Arabia and the fight against international terrorism became the order of the day.

Last year, at Denver, it was the American hosts who found themselves outflanked. High on their agenda was to broadcast the success of the US "economic model". In a conference centre so close to abject dereliction that even the chauffeured leaders

could catch a glimpse, the Europeans and Canadians, led by a fuming President Chirac, made common cause against US "triumphalism".

It was in response to this combination of negative culture wars and the formalistic paraphrasing of interminable foreign policy statements, that Mr Blair wanted to recapture something of earlier, more innocent, summits. He wanted ideas exchanged in an atmosphere where, because formal agreement was not mandatory, disagreement was no shame.

India and Indonesia made this almost impossible. The US, Europe, and Russia were all at odds over how to respond to India, while Indonesia offered even more fertile soil for discord. With the deteriorating situation in Jakarta has come the search for culprits: is it the IMF, President Suharto, or the years of US indulgence of a corrupt, but pro-Western, regime?

As the leaders reemerged into the limelight, it was clear that Mr Blair's quiet and simple summit had turned out to be nothing of the kind.



Tony Blair: Could not keep international crises at bay

Dinners, chats and plenty of time for the Cup Final

THIS YEAR, the British hosts promised, it would be different - and it was. The tangible results of the Group of Eight summit of leading world powers which ended in Birmingham yesterday may have been less than electrifying. But the way the occasion was organised was a change and, by common consent of the participants at least, it worked.

This weekend there has been far less of the "declaration diplomacy" which turned last summer's summit in Denver into a circus - not least thanks to the absence of foreign and finance ministers who had met, almost unnoticed, a week earlier in London.

Inevitably, the Eight issued statements about the big international issues of the moment, from Indian nuclear tests to the referendum in Northern Ireland. But the final communiqué ran to a mercifully brief eight pages, and the topics for discussion kept to three or four.

In other words, back to the "fireside chat" format of Rambouillet, the chateau outside Paris where President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing assembled the leaders of the United States, Britain, Germany and Japan for the first such summit in 1975.

G8 has now become G8, but at Weston Park in Shropshire on Saturday the trappings were similar, with the 2,000 journalists kept outside as the heads of government went into retreat, for a relaxed review of world affairs. If anything, maybe, too relaxed.

So uncontentious were proceedings that the day's business wrapped up an hour and a half ahead of schedule - just in time, by happy chance for those who wished, to catch Arsenal and Newcastle in the FA Cup Final.

Yesterday, too, the Eight wrapped up their business an hour earlier than they were supposed to. Birmingham 98 may be remembered for India and Indonesia. More likely though it will go down as the "Cup Final" summit.

Which raises the old questions about G8 summits: are they worth it, and are the right countries represented? The leaders themselves firmly believe that chatter, less formal, arrangements work.

"This is the right way to do these things," the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl said, promising that the 1999 summit in Cologne would be along similar lines - even though, if pre-election opinion polls are right, he is unlikely to be hosting it. The

Rupert Cornwell asks how useful these meetings are and who are they for.

French and Japanese, too, professed themselves well pleased.

But having a nice time is different from having a useful time. In the end, the actual discussions, including a working dinner and the much-touted "retreat", occupied barely 10 hours of their time. The rest was banqueting, concert-going and photo-opportunities. If there were any profound and penetrating debates, no participant gave any sign of one.

If so, the case for more radical shake-up becomes more powerful. If G8 is an informal "directory" of leading powers, then Europe with four members (or five count-

If there were any penetrating debates, no participant gave any sign of one

ing Russia) is grossly over-represented. And without an Asian power, G8 no longer represents the balance of global economic power.

"Personally, I'd very much like to see China in," President Jacques Chirac said yesterday. The US and other countries who are adamant that only democracies should be allowed in the club will beg to differ.

But Tony Blair was speaking on behalf of the entire G8 when he heaped public tribute on China for its behaviour in the Asian economic crisis, and the French President went further still: "Had China devalued its currency, the effect would have been catastrophic for the whole world."

Thus, while a G9 is unlikely any time soon, Peking may be rewarded for its virtue by easier access to the World Trade Organisation, to which China has been seeking entry for 11 years.

It claims the United States has been blocking the way. If that barrier falls as a result of Birmingham, this blandest, least contentious of summit will have left its mark.

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Lebed set to seize Siberian powerbase

By Helen Vonnack
in Moscow

ALL EYES in Russia were yesterday on the Siberian region of Krasnoyarsk, where elections for the post of governor are seen as a test of whether the former paratroop general Alexander Lebed can successfully campaign for the Russian presidency in 2000.

After the gravelly voiced Lebed edged ahead of the incumbent governor, a rather lacklustre academic called Valery Zubov, in the first round of voting last month, Communists and market reformers joined in urging voters not to elect from the bottle a genie who could become a dictator in the next century.

By first results last night

The vote is a test of whether he can win the presidency of Russia in 2000

suggested General Lebed would sweep the board, with about 60 per cent of the votes, and that Mr Zubov would gain only about 36 per cent.

Russia's Communist leader, Gennady Zyuganov, did not voice his words when he recently compared General Lebed to Augusto Pinochet, the former military dictator of Chile.

General Lebed is a good army officer who saved the former Soviet republic of Moldova from ethnic clashes after the Soviet Union broke up. But he is more controversial as a politician. He did so well in Russia's presidential elections in 1996 that the victorious Boris Yeltsin took him on to the Kremlin team, making him National Security Adviser.

But although he managed to bring the disastrous war in break-away Chechnya to an end, General Lebed became involved in intrigues with his colleagues in government and the President sacked him after

only a few months for being "a bad team player".

Since then, General Lebed has nursed a grievance against Mr Yeltsin while smoothing his own political image and improving the cut of his now-civilian suits. He has travelled to both the United States and France, where he has been well received in some political and business circles, and has built up considerable campaign funds.

He has told Krasnoyarsk voters he wants to be a good governor and has no further ambitions of national leadership. Only the most naive believe that.

Pundits continue to include General Lebed in pre-2000 opinion polls that show him running more or less level with several other anti-Communist presidential candidates.

In the first round of voting in Krasnoyarsk in April, Governor Zubov, who had seemed certain of winning a second term on his home territory until General Lebed threw his hat into the ring, found himself upstaged by the charismatic outsider.

The general-turned-politician delivered bags of potatoes to hungry peasants in neglected rural areas and managed to lure on a visit to Siberia the ageing French matinee idol, Alain Delon, whom Russians adore.

Ahead of the second round, Mr Zubov hit back. National politicians normally as mutually hostile as Yuri Luzhkov, the dynamic Mayor of Moscow, spoke out in favour of the beleaguered governor while the pop diva Alla Pugacheva flew out to lend her support.

However, there was also another singer in Krasnoyarsk. Lyudmila Zykina, a folk performer as big in Russia as Frank Sinatra was in America, and her stage outfit was a white, winged affair that many took to be a gesture of support for Lebed. (His surname means "swan".)

General Lebed's own campaign posters promise "Truth and Order", an appealing slogan for many, including the workers at blocking the trans-Siberian railway in protest over unpaid wages, who feel the benefits of Mr Yeltsin's democracy have passed them by.

India releases the first pictures of its nuclear test site



The crater and debris at the Shakti-1 nuclear test site at Pokhran, Rajasthan, near the Pakistan border, where India exploded five nuclear devices last week. The new Hindu-nationalist-led government in Delhi met with international condemnation for its actions, which could provoke Pakistan into conducting nuclear weapons tests. Photograph: AFP

Court-room love affair puts Canadian law in a spin

By Hugh Winsor
in Ottawa

A SEXY-looking 43-year-old single mother has turned the Canadian criminal justice system on its head by allegedly seducing a man accused of participating in a gangland-style murder while she was on the jury trying him.

The man and five others were acquitted of two first-degree murder charges after a six-month trial in 1995. But last week the juror, Gillian Guess, was charged with obstructing justice as the result of her behaviour during the trial.

Authorities say there has never been a similar case in Canadian legal history and prosecutors have announced they will set another legal precedent by subpoenaing her fellow jurors and forcing them to testify about what happened in the jury room.

The prosecution contends that Guess influenced other jurors to acquit her lover and the other accused. Under Canadian law, jury deliberations

Off With Her Head!!!



Guess In Wonderland

are supposed to remain secret, so the case represents the first time the veil of jury secrecy will be lifted.

The case has already made history since the judge last week ordered Guess to stop writing her *Diary of a Mad Juror* on her personal web site. The web site carried a heading, "Off with her head", and a photograph of the queen of hearts. The web site also has a photograph of Guess looking seductively defiant and one of the topics about the trial was entitled, "The Witch Hunt".

Guess has admitted having an affair with Peter Gill, the accused, but claims their sexual relations did not begin until after the acquittal. Evidence was introduced on Friday, however, that off-duty RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) officers saw the couple "squeezing and hugging" at a popular Vancouver nightclub during the first week of the trial.

Gill was on bail and not in police custody during the trial. The jury was not sequestered. Guess was well known to the Mounties because she had worked with them as a counsellor of victims.

Several court officials have testified about the "saucy looks" and other flirtatious gestures which passed between the juror and the accused during the trial. One clerk became sufficiently concerned that she spoke to the presiding judge at the original trial, who apparently did not pursue the matter.

Prosecutors have told the new trial they will be submitting wiretap evidence about calls between Guess and Gill. Police had also placed listening devices in her bedroom.

Gill, whose murder charges rose from two killings tied to the Vancouver drug trade, appears clean cut and was always well dressed in suit and tie during the trial. Asked what attracted her to him, Guess told journalists that after eight months as a juror "even the judge started looking good".

Guess also reported the judge's order to stop writing about her trial on the web site. She also complained that most media were condemning her, "heavily relying on the crime of short skirts and high heels".

The trial continues tomorrow.



Gillian Guess, above, who is charged with obstructing justice; and left, the web site where she wrote her *Diary of a Mad Juror*

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Satellites signal a revolution in the way we talk

Andrew Marshall in Washington on a technological leap in communications

IF YOU ARE still catching up with the explosion of new information technologies and you've just got used to the idea that the future is wired, then think again. Here comes the wireless revolution, blasting off from California.

The launch of five new satellites in a Delta II rocket from Vandenberg Air Force base, expected today, will complete the complex web of satellites that make up the Iridium constellation. It will enable anyone, anywhere, anytime to stay connected to a phone or pager when it begins operation in September and, eventually, to any other service deliverable down a telephone line.

Iridium is a private consortium bringing together the United States electronics giant Motorola and an array of corporations and investors around the world. The system relies on 66 low-earth orbit (LEO) satellites linked in six different orbital planes that form a web which ties together the world.

With a normal cellular phone, of course, you can communicate internationally - but only if there is a network, and then using the long-distance lines of the country you are in. Iridium users can communicate using only the Iridium system, whether or not there is a cellular network, or use a mixture of Iridium and local cellular.

Satellite phones already exist, using the Inmarsat satellite. But they're big, they need a large chunky aerial, and they are expensive. Iridium phones are little bigger than a normal mobile, and should be cheaper than Inmarsat, the company argues.

The origins of the system supposedly go back to a holiday taken by Barry Bertiger of Motorola and his wife Karen in the Bahamas in 1985. Her mobile wouldn't work, so she asked her husband: "Why can't

a smart guy like you make my phone work?"

The answer to that question turned out to be extraordinarily complicated, and has taken 13 years and \$5bn. It has involved creating the world's largest private satellite network, agreements with telecom authorities around the world, and software that will locate you and your phone wherever you are, and work out the billing arrangements. Not surprisingly, some Iridium executives can express little but awe. "If you believe in God," said Raymond Leopold, the chief technical officer in 1996, "Iridium is God manifesting himself through us."

But will it work? There are technical obstacles, which required the company to shift from its original vision of a satellite-only system to add in cellular, but the biggest problems, at the beginning, may be business obstacles.

Iridium needs to bring in about 5 million customers to get started. The first generation of customers will divide into two groups, Mauro Sentinelli, executive vice-president of Iridium, believes. There will be wealthy globe-trotters who want to be in touch all the time - what Iridium calls the "horizontal" customers. And corporations that want to run their own networks in places where cellular phones don't work and there are no landlines - "vertical" customers, often operating in only one country.

As time goes on, costs come down and equipment gets smaller, they expect the first category to grow, but initially, this will require a collection of different gadgets to get the world's different cellular systems to talk to each other.

There will be competition, when Globalstar and Telecel get similar systems under way. The service won't be cheap.

From the age of Alexander Graham Bell to the wireless phone of the future



The satellites will be able to beam signals to phones no larger than an ordinary mobile anywhere in the world, to your office, home, plane or car

A web of 66 satellites will make up the Iridium constellation



with handsets expected to cost around \$2,500 (£1,500) and calls charged at 30 per cent more than existing long-distance calls. The service isn't yet global, since it relies on striking deals with every country in which it hopes to operate. And there are already vast investments under way in new technologies such as super-fast optical fibre networks.

But the future may well be wireless, for many people. In the early years of the new millennium, the number of wireless phones will overtake the number of wired ones. With a wired telephone network, each individual has to be physically connected to the network. With wireless, once the basic infrastructure has been created, you just buy the handset and switch on.

The relationship between cash flow and fixed investment capital makes it very attractive financially, says Mr Sentinelli. He believes there will be pressure for single solutions: companies will want easy technical answers, and consumers will

want to deal with as few suppliers as possible.

In the US, there is a solid single wired network created by AT&T, but highly fragmented mobile systems, with many different standards. In Europe, there are dozens of national wired networks, with different plugs, regulations, standards and operators, but GSM has rapidly grown up as the single mobile system. In Europe, wireless will probably triumph, while in America, wired has the advantage, Mr Sentinelli says. In developing countries - especially those that now have low levels of telephone penetration, and where distances can be huge - wireless may make sense as a first step, using solar-powered telephone booths in the most remote sites.

Satellite phones, cellular phones, computers, televisions, and normal, wired phones will become harder to distinguish. And if you are speaking on your mobile via satellite and land line to someone on a cordless phone, then is it wired or wireless?

Leading article, page 18

West Bank clashes continue

PALESTINIAN youths threw stones and bottles at Israeli troops yesterday who responded with rubber bullets, wounding six Palestinians in a fourth day of West Bank clashes. The latest round of violence began on Thursday with mass Palestinian demonstrations to mark *al nakba*, or the catastrophe - which is how Palestinians view Israel's founding 50 years ago. Five Palestinians were killed in Thursday's clashes. — AP, Hebron

Australian right in lead

AUSTRALIA'S conservative government, which last week delivered the country's first budget surplus in eight years, would win the next election if it were held now, according to an opinion poll published yesterday. The *Sunday Age* newspaper poll found that 49 per cent of voters preferred the Liberal-National coalition government, 45 per cent preferred the Labor opposition, and 5 per cent were undecided. — Reuters, Canberra

Albanians killed in Kosovo

THREE ethnic Albanians died during clashes with Serbian police in the village of Iglarevo on the main Pristina-Pec highway in central Kosovo yesterday. Most of the highway from Pristina to Pec has been closed for more than a week due to KLA attacks, an ethnic Albanian insurgent group fighting for independence. — Reuters, Kjevo

Temple artefacts seized

CAMBODIAN police have seized more than three tonnes of ancient statues and carvings which were about to be smuggled to neighbouring Thailand. Police seized the cache of artefacts hidden in the back of a truck in the town of Siem Reap in north-west Cambodia on Saturday. Cambodia is struggling to contain a thriving black market trade in artefacts stolen from the 12th-century Angkor temple complex, near Siem Reap. — Reuters, Phnom Penh

Norway expels neo-Nazis

NORWAY ordered the expulsion of nine Swedes among 45 neo-Nazis detained yesterday to prevent possible protests disrupting Norway's National Day celebrations. The neo-Nazis were detained on suspicion of planning to disrupt National Day parades, when thousands of flag-waving children march past King Harald's palace in Oslo. — Reuters, Oslo

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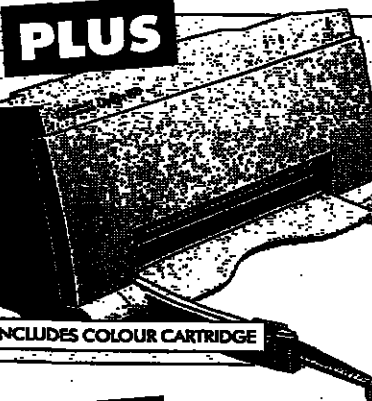
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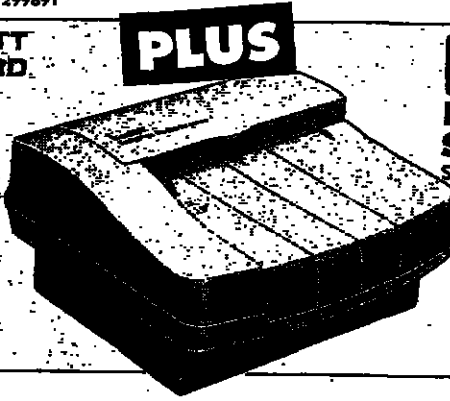
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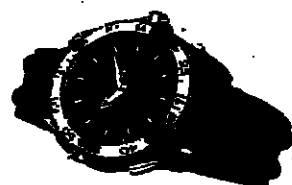
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What supermodels and ketchup have in common

BESIDES being useful in Scrabble, thixotropy is a word that links supermodels, tomato ketchup, non-drip paint and earthquakes.

Put scientifically, a "thixotropic" liquid is one where the viscosity depends on the shear force: the greater the force (the more you stir or shake the liquid) the lower the viscosity becomes, so that it flows more easily when it's being agitated than when it's left alone.

How does that involve supermodels? Because they use mascara—which, in its container, is solid until disturbed with the brush. For a while, it stays liquid, then, on the eyelashes, it solidifies again, not by losing moisture, but because there's no shear force on it.

What makes a thixotropic substance? Generally, complex structures which, when quiescent, hold large amounts of water bonded into a structure like a house of cards—with the water in between the stacked cards. The viscosity is thus very high. Shake the cards, and the water is freed, and the cards can move individually—the viscosity has dropped. Once the force moving the "cards" stops, the structure can reassert itself, bonding the water once more. Think of what happens

with tomato ketchup. You can hold it open over your food for ages, yet nothing happens. But shake it up and suddenly it is a liquid. Commercial ketchup behaves like a kind of gel with fine bits of solid tomato and seasonings dispersed through the liquid.

Non-drip paint? Probably you're getting the idea by now. It doesn't drip off the brush, yet you can spread it on to a surface, where it will remain quite happily.

The idea that earthquakes and thixotropy could be entangled may seem surprising, but the effect is one of the more dangerous ones. Clay can act as a thixotropic substance. In Alaska in 1964, an earthquake struck on Good Friday. In Anchorage, the underground clay turned instantly to mud, because of the shockwaves. Many well-built houses turned into wrecks.

Why? Because the matrix of clay particles, which held the water in place, became dislocated by the ground's movement. That's why city planners in earthquake zones take great care finding out what lies below the ground before they approve building plans.

Charles Arthur,
Science and
Technology Editor



Mascara remains solid until stirred by the brush. When it is on the eyelashes, it solidifies once again, not because of a loss of moisture but because there is no movement. Photograph: Chris Watt

Looking at the big picture

Scientists working on the Very Large Telescope say it will be powerful enough to show an astronaut walking on the moon. By Alexander Helleman

THE SILVER buildings on the summit of the Cerro Paranal mountain in the Atacama desert, in Chile, look like the set for a science-fiction film. In fact, this is where the European Southern Observatory (ESO) is building a very large telescope. The name? The Very Large Telescope—more usually, VLT.

When complete, it will be the largest, most powerful optical telescope available to astronomers, capable, in theory, of seeing an astronaut on the Moon. Except that it isn't a telescope—it is four telescopes.

Engineers and technicians are working feverishly to complete the first of four large telescopes.

Unit Telescope 1—or UT1—is expected to see its "first light" at the end of May. Together with three other identical telescopes, to be completed in the next few years, its 8.2-metre mirrors will allow observation of celestial objects not seen before. "What is unique is that the VLT will combine very high sensitivity

with very high resolution," says the ESO director-general Riccardo Giacconi.

The key to its success is the co-ordination of the telescopes. Together, they will gather as much light as a single 16m mirror. So why not just build a single 16m telescope?

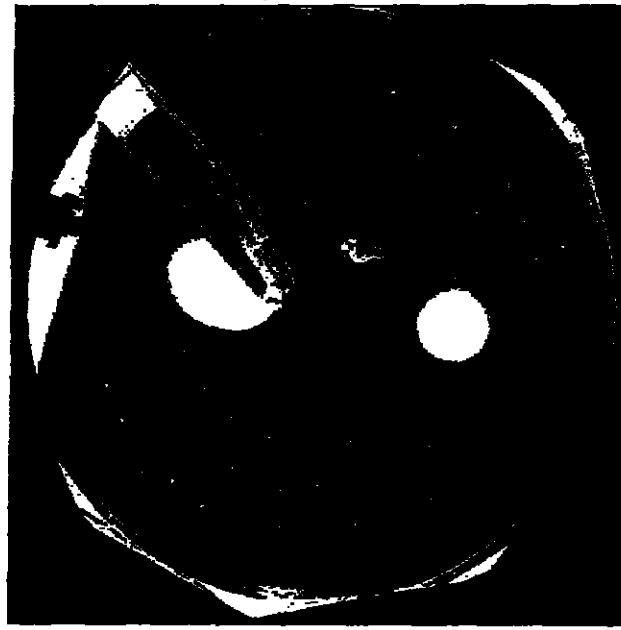
Until recently, ground-

based telescopes suffered two problems. First, the size of the mirror was limited to about 6m, because if it was any larger it would sag under its own weight when pointed in different directions, destroying optical quality. Second, the atmosphere itself. Turbulence in the air causes images to wiggle, as anyone can see in the twinkling of stars. In a telescope, images become smeared and resolution is lost.

One solution came from Star Wars (the defence concept, not the film). During the 1970s, American military engineers developed adaptive optics devices—deformable mirrors that would allow control of the beam of a laser weapon over long distances in air. They compensated for the effects of air turbulence by continuously changing shape. Much of the technology was declassified in the 1980s and astronomers were quick to use it to improve the resolution of ground-based telescopes.

In the VLT, each 8.2m mirror is supported by 256 actuators, all driven by a computer which continuously monitors the reflection of a reference star on different parts of the main mirror. The same actuators also compensate for gravitational deformations of the mirror as its alignment changes.

The greatest challenge is linking the optical signals of the four telescopes so they function like a single mirror with an aperture as large as the distance between the two most distant telescopes. It is a technique already widely used in "long-baseline" radio telescopes. But radio waves are comparatively



The first of the telescope's 8.2m mirrors

easy to combine. To achieve the same results in the VLT light from the four telescopes will travel through 60m optical delay systems that will continuously equalise the distance each beam of incoming light travels. At a central point, the four beams will meet and overlap, creating the interference fringes familiar from school laboratory experiments. Computer processing of these fringes will allow the reconstruction of images with a resolution 100 times greater than by direct imaging. "We expect the first fringes in 2001," says Giacconi. Then the second telescope will be completed and linked up with UT1.

Because the four light beams must cover exactly the

same distance, the control margins of the moving mirrors will have to be much smaller than one wavelength. "This is really at the forefront of optical technology," says the astronomer Eduard Zuiderwijk, an astronomer of the University of Groningen in the Netherlands. "If this succeeds, we will be able to observe objects with such detail that, up to now, astronomers could only dream of," he says. We expect to see galaxies at larger distances and larger redshifts... we will study the formation of galaxies at an epoch that is within five per cent of the life of the universe."

The astronomers also expect to expand their information on planets that circle around

stars. "There is a campaign being put together to measure extrasolar planets that have already been found," says Giacconi. Their investigation will shed light on "how likely it is that conditions for the emergence of life exist in the universe," he adds. "We will be able to measure directly the diameter of a large number of nearby stars and confront this with our theories. I'd bet my right arm that we are in for some surprises," says Zuiderwijk.

Many people will point out that there is already a very serviceable telescope at work—the orbiting Hubble Space Telescope (HST). But Alan Moorwood, who is responsible for the development of the instruments that will be attached to the VLT, explains that the observations by the HST will complement each other. "The HST will see the very sharp points of light in distant galaxies, but not necessarily see the extended diffuse part, while an 8m telescope on the ground is much better at seeing the diffuse part of the galaxy, but less good at seeing the sharp spots."

Such sophistication doesn't come cheap. The VLT will cost about £347m. But Professor Rolf Kudritzki, director of the University of Munich's institute for astronomy and astrophysics, believes the cost is justified. "Mankind wants to know when it comes from, where it is going. Astronomy stimulates people's curiosity by following up these questions more deeply and thoroughly than any other science. Astronomy gets to the roots of knowledge."

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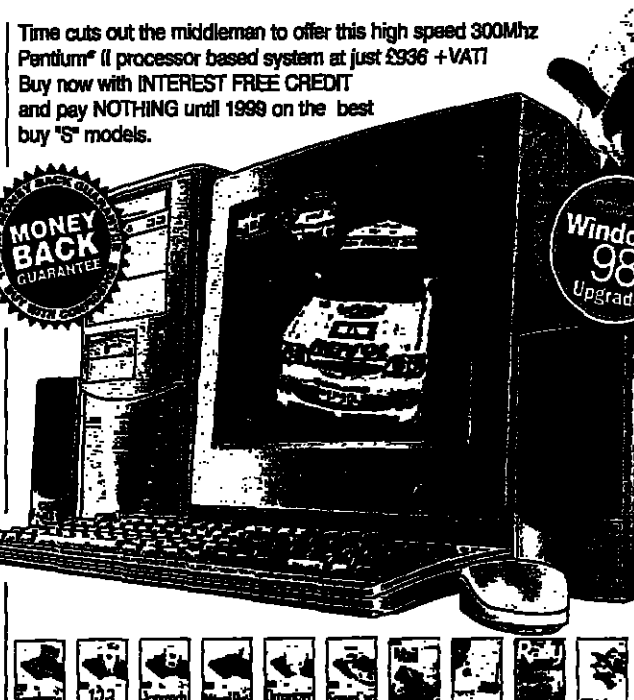
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TECHNOQUEST

Inuit diet/ Nerves/ Population/ Seagulls

Questions for this column may be submitted via e-mail to sci.net@campus.bt.com

Q Citrus fruit does not grow in the Arctic, so how do the Inuit [Eskimos] avoid scurvy?

Earlier this century, Vilhjalmur Stefansson argued that it was possible for people of European stock to live for long periods on a traditional and entirely carnivorous Inuit diet, and that many Arctic explorers had developed scurvy (caused by lack of vitamin C) because they would not follow the Inuit and trust their instinct and experience.

He and a colleague volunteered to subsist on nothing but meat, under medical supervision in New York, for one year starting in February 1928. They each consumed between 100gm and 140gm of protein a day, with the remaining calories coming from fat. Both men remained in good health and showed no sign of scurvy.

It has been estimated that a traditional,

daily Inuit diet, even without any plant material, would contain 40mg of vitamin C, enough to avoid scurvy. But some flora—including rose hips, a good source of the vitamin—grow in areas where the Inuit live.

Q What is in a nerve besides nerve cells?
Poked between the neurones are the glial cells. These make up the neuroglia, tissue which supports the neurone network, protecting it and providing the neurones with nutrients. Glial supporting cells make up about half the weight of the human brain, outnumbering neurones by 50 to 1. In other parts of the nervous system the proportion is much lower, about 10 to 1.

Q What will the world's population be in 2050?

In mid-1997 the world's population was

estimated at 5.8 billion. By the year 2050, it could have decreased to 4 billion because of falling birth rates. But most calculations suggest it could be anything up to 15 billion.

Q Why don't you see seagulls in the Mediterranean?

Actually, you do. But the Mediterranean has a lack of fish compared with places such as the North Sea. This means the number of all sea birds is lower. But there is one gull species called the Mediterranean gull, which looks like our black-headed gull, and one called Audouin's gulls, whose breeding area is confined to the Mediterranean.

You can also visit the technquest World Wide Web site at <http://www.sciencenet.org.uk>. Questions and answers provided by Science Line's Dial-a-Scientist on 0345 600444.

All the rage, and how he survived it



DEBORAH ROSS

TALKS TO
TONY SLATTERY

I MEET Tony Slattery in Dundee. Why here, in this cold, wet, place, where the "best hotel" in town is the only one I've ever stayed in where the chambermaid comes in having a flag? We're here to see Tony installed as Rector of Dundee University. This is a serious appointment. The Rector is responsible for representing the students' interests, both generally and at the University Court. Tony will have to come up here several times a year for the next three years, and hold surgeries. He says to the students: "I am going to pour my heart and soul into this." And: "This is my first step back into the real world." And: "This is the most important thing I've ever done. I've done the telly. And it cracked me up." As it did.

Tony did do a lot of telly. Tons of it, in fact. Indeed, for more than a decade he was rarely off our screens: *Whose Line Is It Anyway?*, *S&M*, *Saturday Night At The Movies*, *This Is David Lander*, *P's & Q's*, *Tips & Fibs*, *That's Love*, *The Music Game*, *Wimbledon Grandstand* with the lovely Sue Barker. OK, I made the last one up but, he'd probably have done it if it had been offered. He was almost omnipresent although, funny enough, never much liked. I mean, did you ever overhear anyone saying: "I just love that Tony Slattery"? Or: "What a genius!" Well, as it turns out, *Tony Slattery didn't much like Tony Slattery* either. It was, it seems, even worse being Tony Slattery than having to watch him fritter away what was obviously a good mind on increasingly rubbishy game shows. He did crack up, yes. Or, as his psychiatrist told him: "You've lost it. Big time."

This rectorship business is actually Tony's first job in two years, since he had a great, big, fat nervous breakdown. Some may say he had it coming. Even, perhaps, that it was necessary, in a strange sort of way.

"I'd had depression before and it's common and you deal with it," he explained. "It was bleak. I'd withdraw for a bit, but then it would pass. It was like the black dog got you, gave you a little shake, but then let you go. But this wasn't like that. The black dog got me in its jaws and just hung on for two years. It came out of the blue and got mixed up with all sorts of other things. Amphetamine abuse. Cocaine abuse. Complete lack of self-care. A sleep disorder started. The psychiatrists still haven't put their finger on this yet. It was almost periods of narcolepsy - I could sleep for three days at a time, but then wake up at the end of those three days feeling totally unrefreshed - and then I couldn't get to sleep for three days after, so I'd be pacing about with what they call psycho motor agitation."

"And in the depths of those horrible two years, I couldn't work, because I was incapable of turning up anywhere on time. It wasn't so much disorganisation. I might have a meeting or voice-over at 4pm. I'd be up, scrubbed, showered and ready to go by 3am, but then go into a sort of cataleptic trance. I'd sit there, absolutely motionless, just staring at a spot on the wall, or a bit of light on the floor, and then I'd snap out of it at ten to four, and panic. Did I have the right tie on? I'd go through all my drawers. Clothes went up in the air. I'd start to cry. The frustration made me later and later and more and more physically unco-ordinated. I'd eventually turn up with a cut or a bruise or something... do you find my speech pattern very fast? I'm making up for two years of going for months on end without saying a word..."

"When did I first seek help? After a five-day period of sleep deprivation, and a close friend, who'd tried in vain to stay in touch, broke into my flat. My speech was disordered. I was very dehydrated from the drugs. My body was making constant jerking movements. I was in a state of hyper-vigilance. The smallest sound would make me jump. My friend said, 'In this state, you must go and see a doctor.' I went to a doctor and he said: 'Right. You are going to take a taxi and go to hospital'... eventually, I saw a psychiatrist who said, 'You've lost it big time.' And then he said, 'I can feel more rage and anger coming from you than I have done in approximately 20 years of clinical practice, and now let's toast crumpets'."



The rage. Yes. I now realise it's what's always been most unsettling about him, this sense that deep down something black and nasty and really not very light-entertainment was going on. I can't think of any other reason why we didn't like him more. Certainly, he's handsome enough. Big, with good hair and very dark eyes. Verbally, he's fantastically dextrous. He can be very funny. He is now thinking about writing a pop-up book on psychiatry.

But that rage. That cruel and immensely unfunny rage, even. He's been known to stand up at award dos and say things like "Jeremy Beadle should be dubbed to death". He once punched a colleague of mine full in the nose for writing something not entirely flattering about him. It did make him, yes, very hard to warm to, as he now seems to understand. "Perhaps people did sense that, as a person, there was something about me that didn't ring true. That inside this cheeky vaudevilian was something quite dark." And, in the end, that dark bit decided to rise and punch him full on the nose? Perhaps, yes, he accepts.

He doesn't know where the rage comes from. "It's still work in progress." He says he doesn't know why it eventually turned inward - in the form of self-hatred - and in effect blew him up. I suggest that perhaps he had to destroy himself, so he could start again as someone else, as someone truer. Perhaps

the breakdown was his mind's way of using the rage to de-construct the "telly tart" personality he'd become, and was necessary in that sense. He thinks about this then says: "I do think I'm now a deeper, more authentic person. I think the real me, whatever that is, did get buried under this light-entertainment, cheeky vaudevilian persona." Perhaps, I further suggest, this is why, for so long, he seemed to take any work that was offered, and ended up doing a ton of rubbish. If you become what you do, it's hard to stop doing it, because then who are you? "Yes! You're right. I was constantly panicked by the thought of unemployment."

We meet in the Rector's office in Dundee at 9.30am. Stephen Fry was the previous Rector, a hard act to follow, Tony knows. "I can't just step into his shoes. For a start, he takes a size 17 plus, and has a terrible fungal infection." Stephen was a very different rector until the *Cell Mates* business, and he went off the rails for a bit. What is it about you boys? I ask. What is it about you and Stephen and Paul Merton? What sends you all barking for periods? Is it the mismatch between who you are who the public want you to be? Tony says he doesn't know. All Tony knows is that when Paul Merton first saw a psychiatrist, the psychiatrist wanted to know if he ever spoke to people who weren't really in the room. Paul said: "Only when I'm on the phone..."

We go off to meet students in the various bars. "You MUST come to me if you have ANY problems," he tells them all eagerly, and maybe even sincerely. A student tells me that she voted for him in the rectorial elections because, when he came to speak to them, "he just sounded so genuine". Genuine? See what I mean, about the breakdown perhaps having been the making of him? He says, earnestly: "I strongly believe this is the beginning of the second half of my life."

So why did the first half go so wrong? He remembers only a "gloriously happy" childhood. He is the son of Irish working-class parents who came to England seeking work after the Second World War. His mother, Margaret, was a home help while his father, Michael, worked nights at the Heinz factory. They lived on the Stonebridge Housing Estate in Willesden, north London. The fifth and youngest, Tony came after a sister, Marlene, then triplets - Stephen, Michael and Christopher. Marlene was quite a bit older. The triplets went about as a kind of unit, so Tony did spend a lot of time on his own. He can't recall minding but did invent a playmate: "He was called Fred. I made him with some old trousers and a dressing-gown but the only thing I could find for a head was a cricket ball. He looked very Damien Hirst meets Gilbert and George." He went to Gunnersbury Boy's Grammar in west

There was a time when Tony Slattery could be seen all over the TV schedules, but a massive nervous breakdown forced him to quit work. The black dog got me in its jaws and just hung on for two years
Photograph: Alan Richardson

London, then run by Jesuits, but he doesn't think his Catholic background or Catholic education left him with the usual baggage of guilt and repression, although when I ask him if he feels authentic when it comes to his sexuality - which has always seemed pretty mysterious to me - he comes back with one of the longest and most impenetrable answers I have ever had to stay awake through. It goes like this: "I don't feel politicised about whether I am gay, straight, bisexual, whether I change from month to month, whether I'm not anything at all, whether I'm interested in light-industrial farm machinery... whoever I've slept with, men or women, then for that period of time of sexual activity you could perhaps define me, but beyond that it's a question I have always found slightly amorphous in my own mind, and so the idea of taking catch-all phrases to say I'm this or this would actually be disinformation. The reality is that I know what I am and what I am is what I'm doing at the time, and that's the most I've ever said about this, because it's a private matter." So, gay then? "As I said, it's a private matter." But our sexuality is so central to our identity, isn't it? "Yes. Of course. But, hand on heart, it's the one area of my fragmented persona that is not an issue."

Truly? I wonder. Did you ever discuss your sexuality with your mum and dad? I ask. "Parents are curious, of course. And they want their children to be happy. But I think the moment a parent says 'I think I have a right to know' is the moment the child can legitimately turn round and say 'Tell me, what was sex like with dad?' Parental and filial love is one thing, but independent sexual experience is another." Interestingly, the only people Tony made an effort to see during his breakdown were his mum and dad. He'd turn up for lunch once a week, as usual, having first gone down the chemist for make-up to hide the bruises. "I didn't want them to think I'd been in a brawl." He has always loved his parents. But, still, I wonder if his lack of authenticity comes from always having tried to be the son they want, rather than the person he is.

He won an exhibition to read medieval and modern languages at Cambridge and, until he met the Footlights brigade (Stephen Fry, Emma Thompson, Hugh Laurie etc) thought he might be an academic. However, he was persuaded by the agent Richard Armitage to give showbiz a go. For the next 13 years, he did not stop working. Never a holiday. Not once. You name it, he did it. Now, I can see, it wasn't so much about him being versatile, just that he could not stop. Until the breakdown made him.

How bad did it get? Very bad. He stopped seeing anyone, apart from his parents and the bailiffs who, because he didn't open post or pay bills, would turn up periodically to take away his furniture. He would apologetically write them a cheque. Such friends he once had just dropped away, "because I didn't answer their calls or their letters. I didn't open any letters for years. They just piled up by the door. And when someone writes to you 30, 40 times beginning with 'I'd love to see you...' then with that friendly irritation, 'why haven't you been in touch?' and then with genuine concern and worry, but you still can't reply because you are so withdrawn, then clearly they start to think, 'I'll stop embarrassing him and myself, and go away.'"

His psychiatrist thinks he won't break down again, that "he's used all his despair up". He is beginning to enjoy things again. His appetite is back. "And I make a very good shepherd's pie". His sleep patterns are returning to normal. He is interested in working again. He will not, he insists, "fall back into the light-entertainment pit". He now wants to see if he can cut it as a serious film actor. He's about to begin re-contacting his friends. "But, as the psychiatrist said, don't be distraught if they don't give you the response you'd get in an ideal world, if they don't go 'Welcome back, Tony. We're so pleased to see you.' I've changed, they've changed, and the friendships may not be recoverable."

He has changed, I think. I'm not saying he hasn't still got a lot of work to do, because he has. But, still, it's a start.

And the winner is... just about everyone actually

IT'S a glittery night at the Dorchester, and Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare is working the dinner-jacketed, frilly-frocked crowd. The classic self-publicist schmoozes through the drowsy throng, pressing flesh and slapping backs with fashion moguls, TV presenters and pop divas. So what's new? Not much, except that these are the first ever Ethnic Minority Media Awards. Mr. Would-be Mayor is chasing the non-white vote with all the frantic charm of a contender who knows very well that it accounts for a fifth of the London electorate.

With NatWest as the chief sponsor, Jeffrey Archer as a patron, and earnest goodwill messages from Blair and Hague, last Thursday's debut EMMA's sometimes felt more like an insiders' job than a platform for embattled wannabes. That was

Awards such as the Orange Prize for women's fiction create a ghetto mentality, its critics carp. Boyd Tonkin disagrees

deliberate, but also deceptive. The new awards for writers, broadcasters, advertisers and campaigners have to wrestle with the same paradox as the £30,000 Orange Prize for women's fiction, whose third winner will be announced tomorrow.

Make a splash, stuff the shortlists with established stars (at the EMMA's, that meant the likes of Ozwaal Boateng, Martin Bashir, Meera Syal, old Uncle Trevor McDonald et al), and people will wonder why you need separatist gongs at all. If the much-lauded and best-selling Carol Shields picks up the Orange for *Larry's Party*, the same doubts will arise. But shun the glitz, focus on the promising unknowns who could do with an extra boost

- and you languish on the margins as another dull Worthy Cause.

At the Dorchester, even the EMMA victors disagreed about the value of the occasion.

Shami Ahmed, the fashion entrepreneur who created the Joe Bloggs label, responded to his award by asking whether the evening served the cause of segregation rather than integration. Yet Martin Bashir - the BBC journalist to whom Diana, Princess of Wales, unloaded her secrets, and nobody's idea of a suitable case for special treatment - stressed how valuable it was "for someone from my background" to gain such recognition. For Maya Jaggi, an *Independent* reviewer and *Guardian*

writer who won the feature-writing EMMA, the event had as much to do with consumers as producers: "Black newspaper readers often have a lot of complaints about what they read on issues close to them. So to be rewarded by a panel of black judges is important."

As for the Orange, its short history has shown that grumbles about separatism will fade if first-class victors emerge and the contest takes the trouble to build a following. At the outset, Mitsubishi of Tokyo dropped their sponsorship after Simon Jenkins had thundered in the *Times* against the prize. Then the expanding mobile-phone group stepped in, with additional cash from an anonymous American

donor. Helen Dunmore and Anne Michaels won in 1996 and 1997, with novels that would rank highly in any company. Crucially, the Orange also broadened its base. It set up reading-groups, education programmes and a successful website - all part of a heart-and-minds campaign that can now protect it against the condescension of the columnists.

The standard objection to restricted-access prizes runs that they risk creating a ghetto mentality - a glass ceiling built by the victims themselves. In Britain (at least) there's precious little evidence that this sort of voluntary apartheid has ever taken root. Orange contenders will not expect to suffer any

discrimination in the Booker. (The other fancied runner for tomorrow's Orange, Pauline Melville's *The Ventriloquist's Tale*, has already proved its form in a gender-blind contest by winning this year's Whitbread prize for a first novel). As for the idea that an EMMA laureate would pass up on the chance to compete for (say) the British Press Awards - well, ambitious hacks don't act like that. Remember, too, that reserved honours often apply to age as well as sex or ethnic origin. Novelists can win the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize while under 35; at 60, though, they become eligible for the Sagittarius Award. Somehow the scourges of PC have missed that one.

Not all restricted awards work. They must have logic and transparency on their side. If not, their limits look like injustice or perversity. Take the Saga Prize, founded by the actress-turned-writer Marsha Hunt, to encourage black authors in Britain. This venture has been hamstrung by its stipulation that every entrant has to possess an "African ancestor".

All sorts of unlikely names would qualify on that score - from Aesop and St Augustine to the slave-descended Pushkin and the Creole Alexandre Dumas. But, as some wits spotted, this seemingly exclusive rule in fact flings the door wide open. Read any modern evolutionary science, and you will soon grasp that we all have African ancestors. So even Jeffrey Archer could take part.

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G8 fails victims of Third World debt

"CANCEL Third World debt" is an appealing slogan, but not a desirable policy. Half the debt owed to the British government by developing countries is owed by Nigeria, and what the Nigerian regime needs is a sharp lesson in human rights and democracy rather than the financial leeway to invest in more arms and repression.

However, the Jubilee 2000 campaign, which lobbied the rich countries' summit in Birmingham, was not asking for anything so simplistic. The campaign, which takes its name from the biblical idea of the "jubilee" every 50 years when debts were forgiven, proposed modest and practical reforms to the debt-relief programme already agreed by the rich nations. As it stands, the programme requires that poor countries follow an IMF-approved "structural adjustment programme" for six years in order to qualify; if they drop out half-way through they have to start again at the beginning. Jubilee 2000 asked for the rule to be eased (except for corrupt, oppressive or high arms-spending regimes), and to be dropped in cases like Rwanda and Liberia, which have just emerged from bloody conflict. It asked for the definition of "heavily indebted" to be widened: at present, poor countries have to be spending a quarter of their export earnings on paying debt interest to qualify. And it asked for more relief to be given to those countries which do qualify. Mozambique, one of the few countries granted relief, has so far been forgiven just 4 per cent of its debts, worth 27p per Mozambican per year - in a country which spends more on debt repayments than it does on health and education combined, and where child mortality and illiteracy are soaring.

The response from two of the G8, Germany and Japan, was particularly disappointing. The Germans in effect accused Tony Blair of hypocrisy, for lecturing them about debt relief when Britain has one of the worst records for writing off debts (partly because we have fewer to write off). The Japanese muttered about "honour" and the danger of "moral hazard" if obligations were not fulfilled. As a result, the summit was faced with a different moral hazard, that of inaction in the face of needless suffering.

Clare Short, in her sympathetic appearance on Saturday "on the side" of the demonstrators, hinted that something would be achieved at the summit at least for poor countries emerging from wars. But when we study the communiqué, what do we find? Mere words. The G8 supports "the speedy and determined extension of debt relief to more countries", but only within the terms of existing policy. And what about the so-called "post-conflict countries"? The G8 will "consider" ways to respond to their needs. If that represents, as the Prime Minister claimed yesterday, "a significant step forward", then we are living in an ethical Lilliput, in need of some seven-league boots.

Rights are sacred - except in church

LABOUR'S MANIFESTO was clear: "Citizens should have statutory rights to enforce their human rights in the UK courts. We will by statute incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law to bring these rights home." It was a pledge that did not need any hedging, qualification or exemptions. Until certain men of the cloth squinted through their half-moon specs and actually read the Convention.

Article 14: "The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion..." Never mind that Britain has been signed up to this well-meaning stuff for the past 48 years, the idea that such a principle might be promptly and efficiently enforced by the British courts had the bishops choking. Why, that might mean courts forcing them to appoint women priests! It could mean forcing them to appoint atheist teachers in church schools! It might mean the churches having to face up to what "human rights" are and whether they are consistent with their traditional practices. Horrified church leaders ran off to see the Home Secretary and told him that, much as they approve of human rights and that kind of thing (especially in the Third World), they were worried about some of the unintended and perverse effects of the Bill going through Parliament.

Jack Straw has now given in to this miserable special pleading. It was the same with the hoo-ha over a privacy law: some sections of the press got steamed up about the right to privacy enshrined in the Convention (Article 8), overlooking the balancing right to freedom of expression and information (Article 10). Mr Straw inserted a clause in the Bill asking the courts to give due weight to Article 10 when interpreting the Convention. Now some conservative clerics are up in arms over discrimination, overlooking the balancing right to freedom of religion (Article 9), and Mr Straw is promising to insert another clause drawing this to the attention of the judiciary. It may be smart politics, but it is not good law. If the churches do not like the European Convention, they should be forced to come out and say so, and say why.

A world on the phone

ANYTHING that can make mobile phones work better is to be welcomed. It is extraordinary that everyone seems to have one these days, even though they crackle and bleep and cut off and don't work at all in unpredictable dead spots. Or perhaps it is not extraordinary, in the sense that a talking dog may not talk very well but it is remarkable that it can talk at all. Tonight, the Iridium consortium launches the last of its array of "low earth orbit" satellites. This will eventually bring cheap mobile phones which work properly anywhere in the world. You can go to the Bahamas, climb the Himalayas or retreat to Wester Ross, and there will be no escape from that irritating guy phoning the office/wife/drinking partner to tell them where he is and by what mode of transport he is travelling.



Dancers demonstrating the tango at Chamatin railway station, Madrid

Photograph: David Rose

A 9x12 print of this photograph can be ordered on 0171-293 2534

Battle of the sexes

Sir: Yes, men hold more positions of power than women and few men take equal responsibility in the home, but women have enhanced their opportunities enormously in the last twenty years. Even though there is still a long way to go to achieve equality in the "battle of the sexes" (16 May), I line up with David Aaronovitch in his debate with Suzanne Moore.

As feminists we do not advance our cause by making dismissive generalisations about men. Many men have little power over their lives. Most women wish to enjoy relationships based on love and respect with men, be they their fathers, brothers, lovers or sons.

In recent years, the Family Planning Association has been working with boys and young men to ensure their needs are met in sex and relationships education. In the past, these lessons have mainly responded to the needs of girls, and boys have felt excluded. Boys too should have the opportunity to explore their understanding of what it is to be male, to learn about their feelings and about relationships.

Focusing on women and brushing aside the issues faced by men will get us nowhere. We must value both men and women, if we are to achieve a better balance in our relationships. ANNE WEYMAN, Chief Executive, Family Planning Association, London N1

Sir: Sophie Robinson ("The things men do (and don't)", 13 May) is a typical example of the warped logic that vilifies men in general and fathers in particular. Her husband has a stressful job in the City in order to earn enough money to keep his family in the style to which they are accustomed. He is also "a wonderful Dad" who plays an active part in family life by looking after the children, taking them out, reading to them, attending school events, gardening, house repair and maintenance, and still he is made to feel guilty about the things he doesn't do.

A more productive (and fairer) approach would be if the Robinsons asked themselves whether they re-

ally need all the trappings of a two-income household. If they were prepared to do without their second car, the cleaner and the nanny, the skiing holiday and all the rest of it, he could seriously consider "downscaling" to a less stressful (part-time) job that would give him more time to take on some of the tasks she resents so much.

HANS BERTELS, Wallington, Surrey

Sir: Suzanne Moore (Comment, 13 May) misses the point that women in power can also face both ways, observing morality in public whilst practising immorality in private. If power and wealth are the aphrodisiac that drives this type of behaviour, then it is unsurprising that men more than women feature in the headlines. As more women gain the same public status, look for the statistics to change. This is not a gender issue, it is an issue of human frailty, regardless of sex. K CHARLESON, Crieff, Tayside

'Cheating' on TV

Sir: You report on restaging of events by makers of television documentaries ("BBC tackles documentary 'cheating'", 15 May). There is no way of guarding against "cheating" apart from the integrity of the person making the programme.

However straightforward the coverage of a subject may be, the viewpoint of the programme maker is always the message that the audience will receive. Making any programme involves decision-making and choice. Place a camera out in an ordinary street and the producer is immediately involved in deciding which way to point it, what lens to use, when to turn it on and when to turn it off. Then when the time comes to edit, which bit will be used; which shot

comes before it and which after it? And all this happens before we write the narration. You don't see what you see, you see what the writer tells you that you see.

Face your producer with these choices in relation to a controversial subject and the process becomes very dangerous indeed. It always was and it always will be. When I worked on the old *Tonight* programme, producers and directors were chosen not only for their talent, but for their integrity as well. Values have unfortunately changed and we are now faced with the inevitable consequences. Don't blame the programme makers. Blame the people who employed them.

RICHARD WADE, Wallington, Oxfordshire

Sir: There is justifiable concern about the reconstruction of "events" in television documentaries. I hope that we can have a similar scrutiny of documentaries about travel in distant and hostile places.

When we watch the intrepid travellers of television explorers on foot, camel or bicycle through a wilderness, why do we never see the camera crew and their transport? Should we not suspect the accompanying presence of several trucks and caravans so that our poor struggling travellers, after a few minutes' shooting, can retire to the comfort of their mobile home for rest and recuperation? This could be as dishonest as a reconstruction of the facts in "actualities" documentaries.

ROBERT NAIRN, London SE1

A united Ulster

Sir: Andrew Boyd (letter, 15 May) seeks to rubbish the Good Friday agreement by asking what kind of agreement asks Protestants to sup-

port the IRA, and Catholics to support the UDA.

The simple answer is that the agreement is inclusive. The tragedies of the last thirty years have their roots in the misguided fears of the two opposing communities; this agreement is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to walk away from division.

Most nationalists now accept that there will not be a united Ireland in the foreseeable future. With this in mind, it is too much to ask for people to work for a united Northern Ireland? OSCAR MCCARTHY, Hull

Take the slow train

Sir: There is no way of realising James Murphy's dream (letter, 15 May) of a train journey between Newcastle and Paris taking only five hours. The total market for travel between the North-east and Greater Paris is relatively small. Air is always likely to be both quicker and cheaper than train. The potential demand for rail could never support an adequate frequency of service.

The current British fascination with high-speed trains contrasts with a growing disillusion with them on the Continent. High-speed trains are not environmentally friendly. Both fuel consumption and noise increase sharply with speed. If the trains require new tracks, they are immensely intrusive; if they use existing tracks, they very much reduce the capacity for freight and for local passenger trains.

The Channel Tunnel rail link is not the only high-speed rail project that should be urgently re-examined. The reconstruction of the West Coast main line to enable it to carry high-speed trains will cost at least £2bn. This is a huge diversion of resources from less glamorous but far more worthwhile rail investment. STEPHEN PLOWDEN, London NW1

Be fair to Gates

Sir: Microsoft should be judged on its record. For several years, the company deserved its reputation for producing sub-standard products which, aggressively marketed, took market share from superior, more elegant rivals. Microsoft's main rival for mass-market PC operating systems, Apple, produces superbly engineered products which are objectively superior to Windows in Apple's key markets - but markets them ineptly. As software developers for most sectors tended to favour the Windows platform, the competition has atrophied.

Adrian Gilbey (letter, 14 May) expects Microsoft to produce even more rickety, ill-conceived software now it has no effective competition in key areas. However, Microsoft's record has been the exact opposite: in the last two years its software has improved dramatically - in innovation, ease of use, stability and cross-platform compatibility. I don't think Microsoft is at all a pleasant company, but their record is confounding standard economic theory. TOM SAUL, London SE26

Sir: I have a modest web site - www.orthodox.co.uk - which has received nearly a thousand visitors in the last month. They have come from all over the world, from countries including Japan, Chile, Iceland, and South Korea, as well from the US, Canada and Europe. The browsers used by these visitors divide roughly as follows: Netscape 66 per cent, Explorer 34 per cent. Clearly at least some users of the Internet are not being cowed by the mighty Mr Gates. ARCHIMANDRITE EPHREM, Manchester

Price of India's bomb

Sir: The thousands of children who eke out a precarious existence in the streets and city dumps of Calcutta and Bombay must be bemused; their government can afford nuclear weapons, but cannot find the money to feed and educate the nation's most precious possessions, its children. JOHN O'SHEA, Goal, London W3



MILES KINGTON

From little lad to old codger: my life measured out in Cup Finals

I WAS idly listening to two old codgers on radio 4's *PM* programme on Friday, being interviewed about the Cup Final - one an Arsenal supporter and one a Newcastle man. The reason they had been selected was that they had both been present at the last Cup Final meeting between these two clubs, in 1952. The odd thing was that I too had been present at that match, not as any kind of a codger, but as a small boy...

My father was a brewer in Wrexham, and the brewery owned the Wrexham Football Club ground, the Racecourse, so my father found himself with his finger in small football pies - in fact, he was for a time Honorary President of the club, which was more to do with being the landlord than any knowledge of football. But one of the perks must have been that Cup Final tickets occasionally floated his way, and in 1952 he said to me, "Right, we're off to the Cup Final, you and me."

It was an all-day trip. We could have caught the train from Wrexham, I suppose, but Dad always preferred a faster route even if it took longer, so we had to leave home early to drive to Crewe, where we caught the Irish Mail, speeding from Holyhead to Euston.

"They always do a damned good breakfast on the Irish Mail," he said. "I think they're trying to impress the people who have just got off the boat from Ireland, and haven't been to England before. Look at that priest over there, tucking in..."

That is the kind of thing that fathers say which you believe implicitly for forty years, and then suddenly realise do not have a shred of truth in them, but which you go on believing anyway. Still, I was mightily impressed by the breakfast myself. The next memory I have is of walking up the big road to Wembley and of the amount of people trying to sell me rosettes of either red or black and

white. I had never seen so many people trying to sell things. Nor had I seen so large a potential market - the population of Wembley Stadium that day was bigger than that of Wrexham, by many thousands, and they were all crowded into one room, as it were. And as I was a small lad, they all seemed even bigger than they were.

Wembley itself was like a white elephant, in every way. From a distance the domes were palatial, but when you got inside the place, it had all the charm of a multi-storey car park, bleak and functional. I clung to my father fairly tightly, aware that if I lost him, I would have to spend the rest of my life among these unfriendly city people with their shabby coats and their smelly outdoor lavatories - even now, I can remember that the Wembley gens was smelly. And then the game started...

About the game itself I cannot remember much except that the legendary Milburn

did not seem that great. The Newcastle winger Mitchell (George Mitchell?) seemed a much better player to me, and I loved the way he jinked and side-stepped past player after player - he even set up the winning goal. But the moment I still remember best was when the Arsenal defender Wally Barnes had his leg badly hurt. He had to go off, and I think later on he came back on and limped around distressingly on the wing, but I remember asking my father why they couldn't replace him with another player.

"Not allowed to," he said. "Got to stick with the players you started with."

"That's not fair," I said. "You should be able to bring on another one."

"That wouldn't be fair either," he said. "The new man would be fresher than any one else."

"I tell you what," I said. "If one side keeps a player, why not make the other side take one off as well?"

"Stupid boy," he said, as he normally did when I had a good idea.

It was a great day. We got back late, tired and happy. Many years later I met some Newcastle supporters in a train and got chatting to them. I told them how I had once seen Newcastle United in a Cup Final.

"Must have been some while back," said one. "Who was playing?"

"Jackie Milburn," said I. "And a winger called Mitchell. He was wonderful."

They looked blank. Then one of them reacted.

"Aye, Mitchell," he said. "My father was always on about how good he was."

His father! I was now the same age as his father! I had become my own father. And that means that in 20 or 30 years' time I can get in touch with Radio 4 and, assuming that Arsenal or Newcastle ever get back to the Final, volunteer my services as an old codger. Makes a chap think.

هكذا من الاصل

Descending from the high moral ground to the G8 summit



PAUL VALLEY
THE DEBT RELIEF
THAT NEVER WAS

APPLAUSE filled the cavernous nave of St Martin's Church as Clare Short swept down the aisle. It echoed too from outside where thousands more protesters against Third World Debt gathered around loudspeakers in the centre of Birmingham's Bull Ring around which 60,000 demonstrators had gathered on Saturday. "Please welcome," said Rev Michael Taylor, "our kind of Secretary of State for Development". By "our kind" the former director of Christian Aid—who is now president of Jubilee 2000, the organisation which had brought protesters to the G8 summit—meant one who speaks the language of the non-governmental organisations to which the protesters belong.

And speak it she did. She talked of the potency of symbolism. Of how today showed that compassion fatigue was far from dead. Of how self-fulfilling cynicism must be banished. Of how optimism and principle and determination could move mountains. Of how, having lost an empire, Britain had at last found a role in working for justice in the developing world. Of how world poverty could be halved within 20 years and eradicated within our lifetime.

There was some good natured heckling when she got to the point of talking about the nations which qualified for relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) which the rich world has agreed. "Not enough, Clare," a chap at the back shouted. And she was able to agree, but talked about progress in the right direction and outlined a five-point plan.

But then the time came for the final speech before the demonstrators were to pour out to form a human chain around the world leaders' conference centre. A quietly spoken man named Ed Mayo, Jubilee 2000's chairman, who is director of the New Economics Foundation, stood up and began to take issue with the five points.

Point One spoke of "maintaining the momentum" on HIPC and yet there was no momentum. It was not working. Before he could finish the Secretary of State, who had sat shaking her head as he spoke, sprang to her feet and pushed him from the microphone to re-address the audience. Mr Mayo had got it wrong, she said, he was one of the cynics. He waited until she had finished and moved onto Point Two. Halfway through that she sprang up again. Then she did it a third time. The audience, which was expecting to be fired up and sent out onto the streets, was clearly deflated by the untimely bickering.

Yet the exchange was a paradigm of the

debate on debt, in which everyone can agree on the sweeping statements about poverty-reduction and yet fall out over the detail in which the devil is supremely to be found.

The trouble with Third World Debt is that it is an extremely complex issue. You would not think so from some of the ignorant comment on the subject this week which subjects the intricacies of international economics to the homespun nostrums of running a sensible household budget. Platitudes like "where would we be if people did not pay back what they borrowed" take no account of the imbalance of power which lies at the heart of the relationship between the First and Third Worlds.

Yes, poor countries borrowed heavily in the Seventies. But they were persuaded to by Western banks and governments which pointed out that, as interest rates were lower than inflation, you'd be a mug not to borrow. Many of the loans were made recklessly by banks which were awash with money—deposited by oil producers after the oil price hikes—and needed to find someone to borrow to raise the interest they needed to pay the oil depositors.

Why didn't they invest the money productively? True, corrupt Third World leaders stashed chunks of it away in Swiss and New York banks and about a quarter was spent on buying arms. But in the early years most of the money was used buying oil at the newly-increased prices. The sums borrowed have been repaid. Yet the debt has increased exponentially from the build-up of unpaid interest following the massive increases in interest rates which occurred until the monetarist policies introduced by the West in the early Eighties.

This is not to say that Third World leaders bear no responsibility. Only that significant responsibility must be borne by others too—from reckless banks to Western politicians who deregulated international capital flows to the point where massive debts could be built up unchecked. There seems, in yesterday's resoundingly vacuous words from the G8 summit, no recognition of that at all. The measures which might realistically have been implemented are set out in the editorial opposite. Yet almost nothing was done. It is hard to resist the conclusion that debt has become too convenient a tool with which to coerce the Third World into turning over control of its economic life to Western multinationals.

What is clear is that the only people free of responsibility are the very ones being asked to bear the brunt of the economic adjustment which poor countries are undergoing to find the cash to pay the debts. It is the poorest people who are losing their jobs under the economic liberalisation and privatisation programmes introduced at the behest of the IMF. It is they who suffer most from the axing of subsidies on staple foods. It is they who cannot afford the health and education fees now introduced. Today—in a continent which made progress for decades after colonialism—infant mortality, malnutrition and illiteracy are rising to scandalous levels.

That is the baseline by which the policy details debated by Clare Short and Ed Mayo must be judged. St Martin's Church on Saturday may not have seemed the best place for Mr Mayo to begin to pick holes in the detail of what the British Government seemed to be offering. But had the activists there known that, in the end, fine words were all that the weekend would offer, Clare Short might not have even raised the more muted applause which eventually marked her departure.

Unionists are marching towards a No vote and bitter future battles

DAVID
McKITTRICK
THE IRISH
REFERENDUM

THE IRA'S Balcombe Street gang did a great deal of deliberate damage to life, limb and property, killing 16 people in and around London in the mid-1970s. Last weekend they did another huge amount of damage, this time unwittingly, when they were feted almost ecstatically at the Sinn Féin ard-fheis in Dublin.

Their intention was to signal support for the peace process but, ironically, it appears they instead dealt a grievous blow to its chances of success.

Over the years that process has often looked doomed: one 1996 book by a respected academic has a whole chapter entitled "The end of the peace process", explaining how it died out that year. Yet still it moves, though the referendum to be held on Friday looks likely to represent a setback rather than the momentum they were supposed to deliver. This is because a majority, or near-majority, of Unionists look poised to back the Rev Ian Paisley's No campaign.

The Good Friday agreement already represents an extraordinary achievement, winning as it has the endorsement of 95 per cent of nationalist Ireland, every British political party and of every involved international player, including Bill Clinton. Nobody likes all of it but all of them regard it as a fair and workable compromise.

The exception is Unionism, where the agreement has exposed a fracture in its ranks so fundamental that it may result in new party alignments. The main grouping, David Trimble's Ulster Unionist party, is clearly split from top to bottom, and so is the Protestant community in general.

One gloomy scenario compares Mr Trimble to Captain Terence O'Neill, the reformist Unionist leader of the 1960s who concluded that change was necessary but lacked the political skills and support to bring his followers along with him.

Irish nationalists were amazed, to the point of shock, when Mr Trimble signed up for



Protestant bandmen in County Antrim marching for a No vote

Photograph: Brian Harris

the Good Friday accord, given his record of rejecting almost all such compromises in the past. Initial amazement turned to delight as he robustly stood by his decision, but now it is turning to dismay as his capacity to deliver is cast in doubt.

If the opinion polls are correct, and if no reversal of present trends takes place before Friday, it seems that more than half of Unionists will vote against the agreement. This stance is an informed one: the grass roots are attentively reading the papers and, especially, watching television programmes on the issues.

And the majority Unionist view, put with classic simplicity by a leader of the Orange Order, is: "We've looked at this agreement and we don't like it." In vain, it seems, have Mr Trimble, Tony Blair and President Clinton asked them to vote Yes; in vain has Gordon Brown visited Belfast distributing money. They just don't like it.

In vain, the Yes campaigners argue publicly that voting No means opting for the past rather than the possibility of a brighter future, and that No campaigners have advanced no feasible alternative. In vain, they argue, more privately, that a No vote would mean the world writing off Northern Ireland as an intractable problem unworthy of further attention.

The Government itself has opted for offering plenty of carrots but hiding the stick. The agreement's virtues are lauded, but Mr Blair has carefully avoided issuing even implicit threats about what a big No vote would mean.

If the question of prisoners was the only sticking-point something could be done to make the arrangements more palatable. But although it is the issue most highlighted by the Unionist critics, it is obvious that the opposition to the agreement goes much deeper.

A senior Protestant cleric said yesterday: "I haven't found one Presbyterian minister who is voting No, they will all be voting Yes. But a number of people in the congregations who were waverers saw the Balcombe Street gang on TV and said: 'That's it, we're voting No.'"

There is an awful lot of bigotry about in Northern Ireland, and a good proportion of the No voters are not just anti-republican but frankly anti-Catholic. Then there are others who agonised about the decision but were swayed not by the Balcombe Street gang itself but by what it symbolised: a whole new political dispensation, part of which is to be the entry of Gerry Adams into a new government.

More than half the Protes-

tants are, it seems, not prepared to go out and vote for that, whatever political and financial resources the Government deploys to entice them. Most of them want peace, but not at this price; and some sound suspiciously more at ease with the old paradigm of conflict than with the prospect of change.

Voting No will automatically put them into the Paisley camp, and it is here that a possible meltdown scenario heaves into view. A vote of, say, 60:40 on Friday in favour of the agreement will technically provide the necessary endorsement for it, but would also make clear that a substantial majority of Unionists are opposed.

The battleground will then immediately switch to the elections to the assembly, which are to be held on 25 June. Mr Trimble is trying to ensure that his party selects pro-agreement candidates, but a strong No vote in the referendum will make him look like a loser and portray Mr Paisley as a winner.

At that point, the more nervous in the Unionist Yes camp may give up the battle, for this has certainly been the pattern in the past. Absolute disaster for the Government will come if a coalition of Paisley members and anti-Trimble Unionists make up more than 60 per cent of Unionists in the assembly, for, under the rules, they could

block every vote and paralyse the agreement.

While that is the Government's nightmare, the chances are it will not be so bad. It seems inevitable, however, that a civil war is beginning within Unionism between those who want a deal and those who don't. The new assembly will be the scene for many bitter battles.

It could take years to resolve this internal strife, with no guarantee that the Trimble camp will ever triumph over their Paisleyite opponents. One Unionist Yes campaigner said mournfully yesterday: "From the No you get a focused, clear, direct, simple message—just say No. It's not like that for us, we have to make complicated arguments."

One astute nationalist commented: "The Unionist case for the agreement is hard to make because it's actually negative. It's hard for them to say to their people: 'Look, this is the best we could get, if we don't accept this, it will only get worse for us.'"

The campaign thus goes into its final week with the Paisley No camp in the ascendant and their opponents fervently hoping for a dramatic reversal of fortune.

Once again, the peace process is in need of last-minute deliverance from those who wish it dead.

Can the Queen's garden party really be improved by television?

TV crews at the monarchy's latest on-screen flirtation may be in for a big let-down, says Ann Treneman

THE Queen has decreed that in future royal garden parties are to be televised. So, as of July, you can see what goes on behind the gates of Buckingham Palace. Live! Raw! Uncut! Everyone I know is already setting their videos to see Her Majesty Unplugged and I will too. But, and I shouldn't really brag like this, some of do not

need a camera to show us what goes on at such events. Some of us, ahem, have had an invitation.

The card was thick enough to be propped up somewhere unmissable in a casual sort of way. My mother-in-law was impressed. It must have been sent in error but serendipity rules fine by me. She talked of nothing but hats for the next month. There is something wrong about a country in which I, and not her, gets invited to such things. But that didn't stop me going.

I would be lying if I didn't say that it was exciting to actually walk through the gates at Buckingham Palace. This is because, until that hot summer's day, I had always been standing outside the gates

watching the only entertainment going: a man in a funny hat who walked first one way, and then another. Not exactly the Grand Prix.

It is a testimony to the power of the monarchy that anyone comes back for more. The reason we do has to have something to do with the mystery of the institution itself. Perhaps the Queen has forgotten this. After all, TV has done the monarchy great harm already. They say the rot set in at her Coronation and continued with the first royal documentary. On the small screen, the creatures royal looked a bit too, well, human. It's got worse. Prince Charles and Princess Diana told us their secrets and who could forget *It's A Royal Knock-out*? Now we are to have cov-



The Queen in her 1997 Christmas broadcast

erage of garden parties, investitures and banquets. It may be part of a drive to modernise but why modernise something that is, by definition, antiquated?

Now the creatures royal will be seen to be human and boring, too.

How do I know? Well, on that summer's day not so many years ago, I strode through those mysterious gates and into the royal back garden. It wasn't small. I tried to imagine Philip out there with the Flynn, but couldn't. To one side are tents serving tea for us plebs. On the other were tents for important types, such as MPs, bishops and (other) men in skirts.

Never have I seen so many men in skirts. There were kilts for the Scots, robes for the religious, and wrap-around things for those men from the South Pacific who seemed to have arrived fresh from hula classes. There seemed to be an alarming number of these (one

good thing about a tiny Empire is that it all fits nicely into a garden party). Some of the military men were bedecked with so much frou-frou and feathers that a chorus line must somehow be involved.

So what actually happened? Well, we walked in a circle for a while and then we walked back the other way. We drank a cup of tea. We decided not to wait in the long snakey queue that had formed in anticipation of the Queen stopping by for a chat. Evidently, in the new modern monarchy, her Majesty will be accompanied on these journeys by a camera crew. What a docu-drama that will be. I can hear it now. Lights! Camera! Inaction!

And that, I suspect, may be a wrap for HRH TV.

A bad idea

While his Canterbury trial for "indecent behaviour" has been postponed until next month, Peter Tatchell and his gay rights group Outrage plan to distribute leaflets to the pupils of London Oratory School in Fulham this Wednesday. The Oratory is currently well-known for educating Euan Blair, son of the Prime Minister. In March, 14-year-old Euan was beaten up by some teenage thugs from another school. Now he will have to endure being handed a leaflet that asks "Are your teachers giving you the gay facts of life?" and includes pictures of kissing gay couples. Tatchell told one of Pandora's colleagues: "We're not interested in a particular pupil. I don't know what Euan looks like

and have no intention of trying to speak to him." Thank goodness for that, but Tatchell's claim to have chosen London Oratory simply because it's a well-known school doesn't convince Pandora. Why else send its press release to *The Independent's* political correspondent if not seeking to exploit the PM's son for publicity? In the name of something like decency, leave the kid alone.

Bombs away!

Pandora knew there was a good reason to turn down that invitation to the Cannes Film Festival. According to a press release that arrived yesterday, "Thousands [sic] of copies of the *European* will be dropped on Cannes on Monday in

PANDORA

Andrew Neil's single-handed assault on the hollow celebration. No doubt the glittering crowds are mobbing Nice airport this morning in a desperate effort to flee Andrew's deadening attack. But what if the Palestinians hear of this devastating tactic and start dropping the *European* on Jerusalem? On the other hand, ticketless English and Scottish fans might blanket World Cup matches with the *European* in France this summer.

Windsor not

Sartorial protest is rare in British politics, despite Gordon Brown's

refusal to wear a dinner suit for his first Mansion House speech. But word comes of Rev Ian Paisley's new tie. Designed by his daughter, Rhonda, the neckwear features Union Jack colours, the Heart of Ulster and the fetching leitmotif "No", over and over again. While, reportedly, there is interest in retailing the tie, Pandora doubts if Paul Smith or Nermes are too concerned.

Taxis free

New York's taxis went on strike last week. Rather than cripple the city, the reaction was one of universal joy. Gotham's streets were suddenly emptied of gridlock for a day. "We've gotten, surprisingly, a large number of calls saying that

this was one of the more pleasant days in a long time." Mayor Giuliani told the *New York Post*. Perhaps a London mayor could provoke similar industrial action?

Remarkable twit

One final report from Belfast, as Friday's referendum looms closer. After a delegation from South Africa's ANC, led by Cyril Ramaphosa, met with Sinn Féin prisoners in the Maze, they also talked to officials in the Northern Ireland Office. Asked what he thought of the South Africans, one Home Counties-type remarked: "It makes such a pleasant change to speak to people who speak English." Now, that's a remark that could unite all Irishmen.

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Asda and Kingfisher call off talks

By Nigel Cope
Associate City Editor

MERGER talks between Asda and Kingfisher broke down at the weekend after the two sides failed to reach agreement on a £1.3bn deal. Talks were said to be "completely at an end" and, although neither side would rule out a return to the negotiating table, insiders said it was unlikely.

Asda, however, claimed the talks had only been exploratory "low key" discussions about how the two companies might have worked together in the UK on areas like clothing, entertainment and pharmacy. It said merger terms had not been discussed.

"They never were merger talks. They were really discussions about ways of working together and considering those areas of overlap between us," a spokeswoman said. The suggestion was that the talks centred on the possibility of Asda selling its "George" clothing range through Woolworths with branches of Superdrug and Comet opening in Asda superstores.

However, other sources indicated that the discussions were specifically about a merger of the two companies which would have created a new retail powerhouse with interests spanning food, clothing, DIY, electricals and pharmacy. It was understood that management roles were discussed and that Sir Geoff Mulcahy, Kingfisher's chief executive, would have been executive chairman of the combined group. Allan Leighton, Asda's chief executive, was likely to take the chief executive position.

"I can see Allan and Geoff working together and I can see synergies between the two groups," said Nick Bubb, retail analyst at SG Securities. "It would be a merger of equals but in a way it is surprising because Kingfisher has a very solid strategy of going into electrical retailing and DIY in Europe."

Mr Bubb said that linking up with Woolworths would be a way for Asda to fulfil its stated ambition of making its George clothing label the UK's number two clothing brand after Marks & Spencer.

Talks between Asda and Kingfisher started about two weeks ago with the initial contact being made between Sir Geoff Mulcahy and Archie Norman, Asda's chairman. Mr Norman used to work with Sir Geoff as Kingfisher's finance director until joining Asda in 1992. Though both sides claim the other made the initial approach, the subsequent talks were held between Sir Geoff and Mr Leighton. The final meetings were all-day talks in London on Friday.

Though neither side would comment on the reason for the collapse of the talks, it is understood Asda was worried by complications that could have arisen because of the level of integration between Kingfisher's UK and international businesses.

A merger between the two would have created a huge business which would have been Britain's second largest retailer after Marks & Spencer. Kingfisher has more than 2,000 stores spread across a variety of formats including Woolworths, B&Q, Comet and Superdrug. It owns the Darty electricals business in France and the MVC and Entertainment UK music and video businesses. Kingfisher's shares have soared over the last three years after a radical boardroom overhaul three years ago.

Asda has become a big success story in the supermarket sector after teetering on the brink of collapse in 1992. It has now established itself as Britain's third largest supermarket group after Tesco and Sainsbury's. Its sales growth is the best in the industry.

As well as cross fertilisation of products in each other's stores, a merger would have generated cost savings through greater buying power in certain sectors like clothing,



Asda's chairman, Archie Norman (left), was involved in initial discussions with Sir Geoff Mulcahy two weeks ago

entertainment and pharmacy. The two businesses have similar trading philosophies as Kingfisher pioneered the "every day low prices" approach. They are also of similar size. Kingfisher is the larger company in terms of market value, with a capitalisation of £7.2bn compared with Asda's £5.5bn. But Asda is the larger in sales with turnover of £7bn against Kingfisher's £5.8bn.

Kingfisher's acquisition activity has been centred on the Continent most recently, with deals in France and Germany. Asda, though,

has the look of a company in search of a deal, according to some analysts. It looked at buying the Welcome Break service stations in a £400m deal a few years ago. Then last year news broke that it was in talks with Safeway about a possible £100m merger, although the tie-up foundered on concerns that the deal would be subjected to a long and disruptive investigation by the competition authorities.

A deal with Kingfisher would be unlikely to encounter regulatory problems. However, there might be problems over the dif-

ferent cultures of the two businesses and who might take the top jobs.

Asda has a very informal management style with open plan offices in Leeds and first-name terms among managers. Kingfisher is a more formal company with a London head office that delegates much of day-to-day operations to the individual businesses. At board level, some analysts say it would be difficult to see Sir Geoff or Mr Leighton wishing to play second fiddle to the other in an enlarged group.

Hopes of BA order fade at Airbus

By Michael Harrison

HOPES are fading at Airbus that British Airways will break with tradition and award the European jet manufacturer an order worth £2.4bn for up to 100 new jets.

Reports in recent weeks suggested that Airbus was ahead of its US rival Boeing in the race for the prestige deal. But sources in the European consortium, in which British Aerospace has a 20 per cent stake, believe this was merely a ruse to get Boeing to return with a more aggressive tender. Indeed, as recently as last month there were suggestions that Airbus executives were angry at being given "the runaround" by BA.

The choice is between the Airbus A320 family and Boeing's New Generation 737 series, launched at the beginning of last year. BA plans to use the new jets to operate regional services from the UK to short-haul and medium-haul European destinations. The order is due to be placed in early April.

BA has never ordered Airbus aircraft before - something which has led it to being christened Boeing Airways at the Toulouse headquarters of the European consortium.

Although senior BA sources maintained last week that Boeing and Airbus had an equal chance of winning the order, Airbus believes that the US manufacturer will pull out all the stops to clinch the deal.

"It is more important for Boeing to keep BA as a customer than for Airbus to win its first order," one observer said. Boeing has ramped up production rates of the new 737 at its Seattle factories after incurring more than \$1bn (£614m) of charges and will be anxious to secure BA's order. Airbus is also considering raising production rates again from 235 this year to 300 in 1999. That would take output of the A320 family to 17-18 a month.

As part of its attempt to secure the order, Boeing has been conducting a lobbying campaign highlighting the UK jobs it provides and the number of suppliers that work on the 737 programme. It says that if selected, it will create work for 25 UK suppliers including BAe, British Aerospace, GEC-Marconi and Smiths Industries. According to Boeing executives, more than 30 major components, ranging from the rudder and dorsal fin to electronic instrumentation, are manufactured in the UK.

Observers also believe Boeing will be keen not to lose such a prestige customer as BA if it decides to press ahead with the development of a super-jumbo. Boeing shelved plans to build a stretched version of its 747 jumbo jet last year, claiming the market was too small. The announcement took observers by surprise and, for the time being at least, left Airbus as the only jet manufacturer preparing to launch a super-jumbo.

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BP in calls for cut in Rosneft price

BRITISH businessmen yesterday urged Russia's president, Boris Yeltsin, to reduce the starting price for the sale of the Russian state oil company Rosneft. Russian officials said Mr Yeltsin had not responded directly to the request, made when he met British executives after the Group of Eight summit in Birmingham, but the request was being considered. British Petroleum and Royal Dutch Shell are among companies which have expressed interest in buying the 75 per cent stake, plus one share, which is to be auctioned off in Rosneft. A BP official took part in the meeting with Yeltsin, Russian officials said. The potential bidders have said the starting price of \$2.1bn is too high in the light of the fall in world energy prices. - Reuters

WPP 'gazumped'

WPP Group is suing the Canary Wharf property complex in London's docklands for £17m after allegedly being gazumped in the battle for office space. WPP had been planning to move all its Ogilvy & Mather advertising business to Canary Wharf but found the space was let instead to the Financial Services Authority. WPP is claiming for wasted costs and lost savings on rent.

Japan thanks G8

JAPAN, fresh from a record package to revive its flagging economy, will consider a review of private consumption taxes from "a broad perspective", Ryutaro Hashimoto, the Japanese Prime Minister, said yesterday. Speaking at the close of the annual summit of the Group of Eight nations, Mr Hashimoto said he had not expected the G8 to give such a strong welcome for last month's 16 trillion yen package. As well as paying tribute to Japan's stimulus measures, world leaders stressed in a statement released on Friday the need for Japan to overhaul its ailing banking system. - Reuters

HSBC denies sale

HSBC Holdings, the UK's largest bank, said it has no plans to sell its investment banking unit, as rivals Barclays and National Westminster Bank have done after failing to compete with world-class US investment banks. Alex Chessman, spokesman for HSBC, denied weekend press reports that a sale of HSBC Investment Bank was being considered and a decision was likely within weeks. - Bloomberg

Dixons plans attack on computer game market

By Nigel Cope

DIXONS is planning an assault on Britain's rapidly growing computer games market in an attempt to become the dominant retailer in the sector. It sees entertainment software as a key driver of growth backed by the continued rise in the number of UK households which own a personal computer.

Dixons proposes to more than double the space allocated to computer games in each of its 340 outlets. The number of Sony Playstation games will be increased from 60-160 in all its stores over the summer. The aggressive move by Britain's largest

electrical retailer will be a blow to the specialist games groups like Electronics Boutiques and Game, which have been growing quickly on the back of a booming market and the success of games like Tomb Raider.

The timing of Dixons' attack could affect the placing of Game's £140m flotation, which is due to be announced in two weeks time. Game had hoped to float at a significant premium to the market helped by the surging share price of Electronics Boutique, whose shares have trebled since last summer.

Dixons has sold £100m of computer game hardware and software this year and

claims to have a growing share of the UK entertainment market. It has been pleased with the performance of its new "mega" store format at Cribbs Causeway in Bristol, which opened two months ago and devotes substantial space to computer and video games. The store also has other features such as a photo-processing centre, which may be added to more stores.

Jonathan Hart, Dixons' managing director said: "We see games as a large and growing market. That's why we're responding to our customers' demands for the best range and choice Dixons can offer." The company will create the space for

more games in its branches by mounting televisions on walls. It reckons wall-mounted TV displays will help demonstrate the qualities of digital TV sets as they come on stream later this year.

The UK entertainment software market was worth £624m last year and is growing fast. Dixons says 19 per cent of UK households own a PC and that consumers buy six to eight games a year on average.

The market is at present dominated by specialists like Game and Electronic Boutiques. Other strong players in the market include music megastores like Virgin and HMV.

Hillsdown rejects £1.5bn offer from Unigate

A BIDDING war could break out for the various parts of the Hillsdown Holdings food conglomerate after it emerged that Unigate has had a £1.5bn offer for the group rejected.

Unigate, the milk and fresh food business with a cash pile of £280m, made the offer at the beginning of the year in an attempt to pre-empt the individual sale of Hillsdown's businesses, which are being demerged into three different quoted companies.

Unigate is interested in the chilled foods business, which is a big supplier of ready-made meals to Marks & Spencer. It would have sold off unwanted parts such as Hillsdown's furniture and housebuilding operations, which have been the subject of interest from trade and financial buyers.

However, analysts say rival offers for the food operations could come in from companies such as Northern Foods, Geest

and Danone, the French foods company. Depending on the movement in Hillsdown's share price this morning, the company may be forced to make a statement about the offer to the Stock Exchange.

It is possible that Unigate could come back with a higher offer for the whole of Hillsdown. This would have to be a significant increase on the previous bid as Hillsdown is currently valued at £1.35bn as

of Friday's closing price of 185.5p. However, it is more likely to make an offer for the chilled foods business, which is considered the jewel in Hillsdown's crown.

Unigate has sufficient cash resources to finance an offer. Meanwhile, it is possible Unigate would spin-off its dairy operations into a separate company, or merge them with Express Dairies, the recently demerged milk operation of Northern Foods.

Robert Earl plans Megaplex chain

By Andrew Yates

AS LONDON'S Planet Hollywood restaurant gears up to celebrate its fifth birthday, Robert Earl, the Orlando-based English impresario behind the famous eatery, is about to unveil a huge expansion plan throughout the UK. The charismatic cockney is on the verge of announcing his group's first "Megaplex" cinema complex. A new music themed restaurant is also about to be opened in Leicester Square, a concept that could be rolled out around the world.

At least eight megaplexes, incorporating cinemas and restaurants, are on the menu. Movie goers could soon be presented with a choice of themed restaurants as they make their way to up to 30 cinema screens. Mr Earl, the group's founder and chairman, has already found a venue in Manchester and has shortlisted sites in seven other British cities. The new venture raises the possibility

that a chain of Planet Hollywood restaurants will be established around the UK, sitting alongside all-star cafes, the group's new sports restaurant chain, and Cool Planet ice-cream parlours. The group recently raised £250m to build 1,000 screens by 2000 with AMC entertainment, a Kansas-based cinema operator. Planet Hollywood Hotels could be next.

Speaking from Orlando, Mr Earl said he did not see himself as a mere restaurateur. "This is all about building world-wide trade marks around movies, sports and music, the three things every household in the world can identify with... I am a brand builder."

But Mr Earl's brand-building efforts have not gone entirely to plan. Backing from Hollywood icons such as Arnold Schwarzenegger, Bruce Willis and Sylvester Stallone, ensured that Planet Hollywood was launched in a blaze of publicity. But its profits and share price fell down to earth last year after its ex-

pansion plans failed to live up to expectations. Now Mr Earl seems more determined than ever to prove his critics wrong. "Planet Hollywood has moved from its hype to a level of establishment. Average sales are still the highest in the world," he insists.

Mr Earl suggests last year's problems were caused by growing too fast too soon. "We opened 30 new places to get to 80 in 1997. That takes up a lot of time for celebrities. We got the best sites for the future but the expense in the short term was that I took my eye off the ball. We are still market leader and are now getting back to basics."

Mr Earl believes Planet Hollywood can thrive and he is ready to invest a lot of money betting it will. "The themed restaurant sector is still growing about 15 times more dynamically than any other sector." And he is keen to point out that Planet Hollywood remains the highest-grossing restaurant in London and, for that matter, Paris.



Five years on from the launch of Planet Hollywood, Robert Earl and his wife Trish are again planning to combine cinema and restaurants in Megaplex sites across the UK

In a business that uses no advertising, much depends on the celebrities involved. And, with the value of their 17 per cent stake in the group falling sharply last year, the founding movie stars have a big incentive to get Planet Hollywood back on track.

Only last week Arnold Schwarzenegger was opening the first Planet Movies megaplex in Ohio and Bruce Willis is plan-

ning to play in London when the fifth anniversary of Planet Hollywood is officially celebrated later this month.

Mr Earl is convinced his brands must work. "In life, as we get more and more intense, we need more escapism." Planet Hollywood is Mr Earl's own brand of escapism. "I never get bored. Being creative is the biggest excitement you could ever have."

STOCK MARKETS

Indices	Close	High	Low	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	5917.80	5920.00	5915.00	6150.5	4382.8	3.566
FTSE 250	5797.80	5800.00	5795.00	5795.6	4384.2	2.8
FTSE 350	2873.00	2875.00	2870.00	2938.7	2141.8	3.417
FTSE All Share	2998.43	3000.00	2995.00	2851.2	2105.59	3.386
FTSE SmallCap	1749.20	1750.00	1745.00	2788.5	2102.1	2.917
FTSE Floating	1477.30	1480.00	1475.00	1473.9	1225.2	3.075
FTSE AIM	1108.20	1110.00	1105.00	1108.2	985.9	1.078
FTSE EURO 100	1016.79	1018.00	1015.00	1021.91	897.32	1.356
Dow Jones	9056.00	9060.00	9050.00	9291.76	1448.21	0.994
Nikkei	15242.86	15250.00	15230.00	15242.86	14488.21	0.994
Hang Seng	9538.39	9540.00	9535.00	10820.51	7909.13	4.204
Dax	5363.14	5365.00	5360.00	5442	3487.24	1.476

INTEREST RATES

UK Interest rates				US Interest rates			
Rate	3 month	6 month	1 year	Rate	3 month	6 month	1 year
UK	7.50	7.50	7.50	5.97	5.97	5.97	5.97
US	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.97	5.97	5.97	5.97
Japan	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55
Germany	3.63	3.63	3.63	3.63	3.63	3.63	3.63
Money Market Rates							
Rate	3 month	6 month	1 year	Rate	3 month	6 month	1 year
UK	7.50	7.50	7.50	5.97	5.97	5.97	5.97
US	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.97	5.97	5.97	5.97
Japan	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55
Germany	3.63	3.63	3.63	3.63	3.63	3.63	3.63
Bond Yields							
Rate	3 month	6 month	1 year	Rate	3 month	6 month	1 year
UK	7.50	7.50	7.50	5.97	5.97	5.97	5.97
US	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.97	5.97	5.97	5.97
Japan	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55
Germany	3.63	3.63	3.63	3.63	3.63	3.63	3.63
MAIN PRICE CHANGES							
Rate	3 month	6 month	1 year	Rate	3 month	6 month	1 year
UK	7.50	7.50	7.50	5.97	5.97	5.97	5.97
US	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.97	5.97	5.97	5.97
Japan	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55
Germany	3.63	3.63	3.63	3.63	3.63	3.63	3.63

CURRENCIES

Pound				Dollar			
	Friday	Wk's chg	Yr ago		Friday	Wk's chg	Yr ago
Dollar	1.6265	+0.20c	1.6377	Mark	0.6148	+0.45p	0.6106
Mark	2.9053	+0.44pt	2.7849	£ sterling	1.7856	+1.45pt	1.6950
Yen	218.97	+11.15	190.75	DM	1.5457	+1.51	115.50
£ index	103.20	+0.20	99.60	S index	110.40	1.10	110.50
OTHER INDICATORS							
	Rate	Chg	Yr ago		Rate	Chg	Yr ago
Bank of US	14.25	0.18	19.20	GDP	114.60	2.80	111.48
10 yr bond	301.25	0.40	347.35	RPI	160.50	3.50	156.36
10 yr bill	5.66	-0.35	4.84	Base Rates	7.25		6.25

www.bloomber.com/uk
source.bloomber.com

TOURIST RATES

Australia (\$)	2.5243	Malta (lira)	0.8171
Austria (schillings)	19.84	Mexican (nuevo peso)	12.58
Belgium (francs)	58.25	Netherlands (guilders)	3.1794
Canada (\$)	2.3030	New Zealand (\$)	2.9422
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8283	Norway (krone)	11.92
Denmark (marks)	10.82	Portugal (escudos)	287.90
Finland (markka)	8.8480	Saudi Arabia (rials)	5.9474
France (francs)	9.4697	Singapore (\$)	2.6945
Germany (marks)	2.8330	Spain (pesetas)	239.18
Greece (drachma)	48.57	South Africa (rand)	7.9839
Hong Kong (\$)	12.26	Sweden (krone)	12.31
Ireland (punts)	1.1175	Switzerland (francs)	2.3581
India (rupees)	61.12	Thailand (baht)	2.588
Israel (shekels)	5.5578	Turkey (liras)	899.045
Italy (lira)	2.787	USA (\$)	1.5945
Japan (yen)	214.92		
Malaysia (ringgits)	5.8072		

Notes for indication purposes
Source: Thomas



**GAVYN
DAVIES
ON WHY
FISCAL EASING
DOES NOT
ALWAYS BOOST
ECONOMIES**

Tax cuts are not a simple solution for Japan

ECONOMISTS, especially macro-economists, frequently complain that their work is handicapped by a lack of laboratory experiments. This is why it is so fascinating to study what is going on in Japan - a laboratory experiment in how much damage an egregiously misguided macroeconomic strategy can do to a developed economy.

Last week, this column argued that Japan now stands at a crossroads, with the US urging the Hashimoto government to adopt a further easing in fiscal policy, while the Bank of Japan is apparently flirting with the notion of opening the monetary floodgates. There are no apologies for returning to this topic this week, since the entire world economic outlook could hinge on which of these policy options is chosen.

The US recommends fiscal action because it would boost Japanese domestic demand, and alleviate the Asian crisis without devaluing the yen. But influential voices are now arguing that fiscal stimulus is not sufficient, and that it may become necessary, as a last resort, for the central bank to take to the printing presses.

Paul Krugman of MIT is one such voice, as his insightful new article on *Japan's Trap* (posted on his personal website, <http://web.mit.edu/krugman/www/>) explains in detail. He reckons that real interest rates are simply too high to allow private sector spending to rebound, and says that this will remain the case until the central bank generates the expectation of future inflation by announcing a permanent increase in monetary growth. But if the printing presses really were switched on, the consequent devaluation of the yen would push China and the rest of Asia into much deeper trouble.

Japan's problem has many dimensions, but at present the key elements are severe debt deflation, along with a liquidity trap which prevents interest rates from falling. What does this combination imply? As recession deepens, and prices fall, the real burden of debt increases, crippling an already-weakened banking sector. The appropriate response from the central bank is obviously to reduce real interest rates, but this cannot be done since nominal interest rates cannot go below zero. In fact, real interest rates - *perversely* - rise as inflation goes negative.

The traditional analysis of liquidity traps, which dates back to Keynes and Hicks in the late 1930s, emphatically suggests that an easing in budgetary policy, not monetary policy, is the correct way out of this problem. In fact, increases in the money supply are usually thought to be entirely pointless when a liquidity trap exists, because the demand for money becomes infinite. Nominal interest rates on bonds are driven to such low levels (not necessarily zero but probably pretty close) that money absolutely dominates bonds as a medium for savings. If the central bank attempts to pump more money into the system by buying bonds, the money is simply accepted by the private sector with interest rates remaining unchanged at very low levels. Nothing else changes.

Not only is it pointless to attempt to use monetary policy, but budgetary expansion can become extremely powerful in a liquidity trap, assuming that it can affect aggregate demand. This is because interest rates do not rise as demand increases, so there is no crowding out of the extra budgetary spending through tighter monetary conditions. Overall, then, the tra-

ditional theory seems to support the case for fiscal, not monetary, medicine in Japan today.

Unfortunately, however, there are genuine reasons for doubting whether this traditional analysis holds. This is because fiscal expansion might not even get as far as increasing aggregate demand in the first place, so the absence of any crowding out through rising interest rates becomes irrelevant.

Here we come to another building block of macroeconomics, the theorem of Ricardian equivalence. This states that, under certain very restrictive assumptions, tax cuts will not stimulate demand. This is because rational consumers will observe that the build-up in public debt necessary to finance the original tax cuts must imply that higher taxes will be needed to service the debt in the future. Since households are no better off in the long run, there is no reason why they should raise their spending in the first place.

Usually, full Ricardian equivalence can be safely discarded as a curiosity of the textbooks, but that is not necessarily the case in Japan today. The extremely severe nature of the public sector debt problem, the high profile it has been accorded in political debate, and the imminence of demographic ageing, all imply that consumers may be very sceptical about whether tax cuts can be safely afforded by the government.

Even if they are described by politicians as "permanent", such tax cuts may therefore be viewed by households as very temporary, and might therefore have rel-

Japan's fiscal predicament

% of GDP	1982	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
budget deficit	1.5	-1.8	-2.3	-3.6	-4.3	-3.4	-5.0
general government	-2.0	-4.8	-5.1	-6.5	-6.8	-5.5	-7.0
excluding social security							
public debt/GDP ratio	61.1	64.8	70.9	78.4	82.6	88.7	91.7
gross debt	4.2	5.2	8.0	11.8	15.8	18.4	23.4
net debt							
fiscal stimulus (+)	-0.7	-0.6	-0.1	-1.1	-1.2	+1.5	+1.2
or tightening (-)							
longer term trends							2030
budget deficit							-2.1
net debt/GDP ratio							8.7

Source: Bank of Japan, IMF and OECD

atively little effect on spending. This perception is likely to be strengthened by the existence of the Fiscal Structural Reform Law, which insists that the budget deficit must be reduced to under 3 per cent of GDP by 2005. This means that tax payers can anticipate a fiscal tightening of over 4 per cent of GDP in the first five years of the next century - quite a dampener on consumer confidence - even in the absence of more tax cuts in the next 18 months.

As the table shows, the Japanese government is already running a deficit of about 7 per cent of GDP, excluding the (temporary) surplus in the social security budget. The ratio of gross public debt to GDP is close to 90 per cent, and although the net debt ratio looks comfortable at only 23 per cent, this is because the social security system temporarily holds financial assets which will quickly disappear as the population ages. The full severity of Japan's fiscal problem is demonstrated by the figures at the bottom of the table which

show that, on present policies, the budget deficit and debt ratios will truly explode in the first third of the next century.

This, of course, is why the Ministry of Finance has been reluctant to "go for broke" with a massive fiscal easing. From 1992-96, the cumulative fiscal stimulus was about 3.7 per cent of GDP, and according to the OECD this managed to boost the level of GDP at the end of the period by only 1.2 per cent of GDP. In other words, the long-run multiplier from the

fiscal boost to final spending was less than one third, which is extremely mediocre by normal international standards.

Notwithstanding these genuine reasons for doubting whether tax cuts will work in present circumstances, there is a strong case for having one more attempt at a huge fiscal package this summer. To have any chance of success, these tax cuts must be described as permanent (which means amending the Fiscal Structural Reform Act); they must be much larger than anything so far contemplated; and they must involve cuts in marginal tax rates at the upper end of the income scale which are not offset by increased taxes lower down. None of these requirements will be easy to achieve. Indeed, the past record of the Hashimoto government suggests that such decisive action is only a remote possibility.

If so, Japan may soon face Krugman's trap, in which the last resort policy of massive and permanent monetisation may begin to look like a gamble worth taking.

TWO of Britain's most eminent businessmen who have warned against excessive boardroom pay are accused of presiding over "fat cat" share option schemes at their own blue chip companies in recently submitted union wage claims, writes Barrie Clement.

In contrast with the "moderate" pay rises enjoyed by employees, a senior union negotiator points to the "excessive" earnings of directors at the chemicals giant ICI, and the

Greenbury in 'fat cat' row

pharmaceuticals group Zeneca. Sir Richard Greenbury, who chaired a committee into top pay three years ago, is also chairman of the remuneration committee at Zeneca, and Sir Ron Hampel, chairman of ICI, was the author of a report into corporate governance published last August.

The criticism of boardroom

pay policies at ICI and Zeneca emerge at a time when ministers are considering intervention to enforce moderation. Last week an Institute of Management report showed that the gulf between the boardroom and the shopfloor was continuing to widen, with directors enjoying an average pay rise of 10.2 per cent - up from 7.9 per cent last year

compared with a 4 per cent growth in earnings elsewhere.

In wage claims submitted to ICI and Zeneca, Fred Higgs, a senior national official at the Transport and General Workers' Union, points to a gulf between the increases his members are expecting and the "huge" sums yielded by share option schemes. At ICI, Mr Higgs says that

members had to justify a pay increase in terms of their productivity. In the wage claim it was pointed out that three directors received ex-gratia payments instead of share options because they were aware of unpublished price-sensitive information. The union complains that the payments were in anticipation of share performance over the next three years and were paid out regardless of competence or whether the executives stayed at the company.

Treasury to publish ISA benchmark

By Nic Cleeves

THE TREASURY is today expected to publish a benchmarking system for its proposed new tax-free Individual Savings Account (ISA) in an attempt to ensure consumers are protected from excessive charges and disadvantageous returns.

The Treasury paper con-

tains proposals for a so-called CAT standard to be applied to ISAs. The name is based on an acronym of the three areas the Treasury wants to see covered by the CAT: reasonable costs, easy access and decent terms.

The proposals come despite warnings by Howard Davies, chairman of the Financial Services Authority, the City watch-

dog expected to police the CAT standards, that such a move might not work if it implies a guaranteed return or general suitability to investors.

But the Treasury believes its proposed system will stop short of such guarantees. The aim will be to ensure that consumers do not find the products they buy have hidden catches.

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Heart is ripped out of an ancient gypsy fair



A row over caravan parking threatens a rural horse show. Mark Oliver reports

A YOUNG boy rides bare-back at a 500-year-old gypsy horse fair in the Cotswolds. But such evocative rural scenes are under threat from the local council which plans to take legal action to jail travellers for parking their caravans on the site, just outside the picturesque village of Stow-on-the-Wold.

The gypsies say the move has ripped the heart out of one of their most cherished traditions, with falling numbers of caravans braving the law each year.

A group of gypsies owns the land, but was refused planning permission to park caravans there and in 1996, the council won a High Court injunction banning residential caravans from the site.

This year, it is threatening to enforce the ruling. Any gypsy or traveller breaking it could be

sentenced to up to 14 days in jail. It could also spark fears over the fair's future.

Before last week's annual two-day fair, which was established by royal charter in 1476, the council placed an advertisement in *Horse and Hound* magazine, which is read by travellers, warning of the possible jail threat and put up signs to that effect in the area.

The result was a fall in the number of caravans that turned up - only 77 when four years ago there had been 450.

It's a long-running battle and a classic case of the liberty of the gypsies versus varying degrees of aggravation to the local community. The council says that local residents have complained of theft, intimidation, drunken belligerence, and even excrement being left in a



A trader holds a horse for inspection (top) and a boy riding at the gypsy horse fair in Stow-on-the-Wold (above). Its future is threatened by a legal wrangle Photographs: Tom Piltson

field one year when they claimed the gypsies did not bring "facilities".

"I'm going to fight to the death because the injunction is silly and the council are hoping they will stop them from coming," said Vera Norwood, a parish councillor sympathetic to the travellers' cause.

"It's such a wonderful day for them, it's like their Christmas, they meet up with all of their family and there are loads of engagements. The girls dress up in all their bangles and have their long hair done and the young men do their courting."

"I'm not saying there is

never any trouble, but I feel much safer there than when I pop out to the post box with the local skateboard kids hanging around."

Maurice Brennan, head of environmental health at Cotswold District Council, said: "We are not trying to stop the fair - it's not even our hidden

agenda - we are just trying to stop the travellers from staying there and turn up on the day instead."

Mr Brennan conceded that there had been "resentment" among the gypsies and anger at the decision of the local pubs to close this year. But he added: "I feel there was a bet-

ter atmosphere this year." Mrs Norwood said the fair had been wonderful but lamented: "There was only half the amount of people that should have been there and I think the stallholders were unhappy with business."

The police said this year's event had been "extremely

quiet" in terms of complaints. There had been some parking offences, reports of suspicious persons and two thefts.

But the most notable complaint was the theft of one of the travellers' £18,000 caravans. Unlikely, one assumes, to have been perpetrated by one of those "thieving g'pocs".

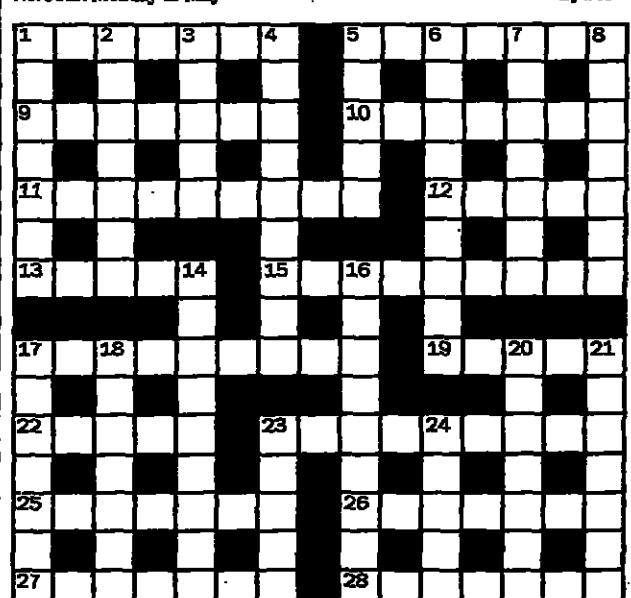


Following in a centuries-old tradition, young boys enjoy a light-hearted fight at the annual two-day horse fair, which was set up by royal charter in 1476

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3613, Monday 18 May

By Portia



- ACROSS**
- German town house (7)
 - Visible form of intelligence (9)
 - Lying in wait to drag out reactor's family (7)
 - Hot line in Continental bread (7)
 - List of directions about organising team run (9)
 - Island's engaged in informal talks (5)
 - Pointless to a great extent (2,3)
 - Deliberately covering object (2,7)
 - See a film about dead poet (9)
 - Hard on flyers going out East - it's hell! (5)
 - Measure of regret about trainee finishing mid-April (5)
 - Game shoot joined by a number of English (9)
 - Vote against prospect of European candidate (7)

- Willing to protect marshland as a source of resin (7)
- Present rate's moving quickly (2,5)
- Just so cross with what's done in the cathedral (7)
- DOWN
- Opening without British popular artist (7)
- Bring up right to be in union with Northern banker (7)
- Bill is less trendy as a singer (5)
- Lengthy procedure set up by academic character (9)
- Result of one's position (5)
- Soldiers don't step smartly to it (4,5)
- Outburst of love engulfing the Italian scientist (7)
- Titanic in terms of capacity? (7)
- Regard army personnel caught by security (9)
- Teacher of games expected to ring, being eager (9)
- End up hiding foreign currency for her (7)
- Crack military unit hit one in naval battle (7)
- Benefit in advance of public share (4,3)
- Playground? (7)
- Rush back initially to start race (5)
- Heard to tinker with American port (5)



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